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# INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION

By  
WINSTON L. KING



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INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION

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To all those, whether of my own faith or another, who  
have helped me toward understanding, either by their  
written and spoken word or their example

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Religion

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## AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

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Just as it is helpful to know the rules of a game before one plays it, or to see a map of the region in which one proposes to travel, so it may be of value to the prospective reader to know what this book aims at and how it goes about achieving that aim.

It is not a detailed description of a number of religions, such as might be found in comparative or historical treatments of the subject. It is not a collection of miscellaneous religious curiosities such as travelers or anthropologists sometimes present to us in their books. Such works have their uses, and offer an abundance of colorful material for the interested student. But it is very easy in such treatments to lose sight of both the essential unity and the fundamental significance of man's religions in the process of studying their many diversities and entertaining eccentricities.

Nor is this a philosophy of religion which would examine the major beliefs and doctrinal structures found in man's religions in order to pronounce upon them a verdict of "reasonable, well-supported, and true" or "fantastic, irrational, and improbable." Such valuations have their place in every study of religion, and we do not avoid them here. But in such a work it is easy to lose the sense of the concrete variety and living depth of actual functioning religions. What is given us in such a study is often only the bare bones of the intellectual statements of religious dogma, not the vital phenomenon of breathing and moving religions themselves.

What we seek here is a combination of the values of each of the above methods of studying religion, with if possible an avoidance of their faults. We shall attempt to observe religion as it functions in its many variant forms, after the manner of the historical study; but we shall also keep continually in mind that religions are one as well as many, and thus avoid adding together meaningless catalogues of differing customs. Somewhat after the manner of the philosophical study of religion, we shall interpret the meaning and assess the worth and importance of religious ideas and practices, but keep such interpretations tied closely to the specific and concrete forms of actual religious life.

This approach accounts for the title: *Introduction to Religion*. As an introduction it will not give a complete account of any one religion in terms of its

history and beliefs. It will seek rather to give insight into the religious approach to life, whatever its forms and level, and to some extent discuss the *total* development and meaning of religion in the life of mankind. Primitive religions will give us some light on the probable origin and development of religious faith. Some of the "dead" religions of the past will help illustrate the varied social and ritual forms that religion has taken on during its development. But most of our attention will be centered on the typical ways in which the great living faiths of the present day have dealt with the basic religious concerns of mankind in their patterns of thought, their moral codes, and their institutions.

The way in which this is done will be obvious from a bird's-eye view of the table of contents. Part I discusses the meaning of the term "religion" and how it shall be distinguished, both in its diversity and unity, from other kinds of human activity. In Part II we observe the social expression of religion in terms of its group life, how it has fitted into and sustained nonreligious social groups, and has also created its own distinctive societies within the larger society. Part III is a description and evaluation of the great classical religious patterns of human salvation. And in Part IV we shall examine the intellectual efforts of various religions as they have sought to deal with the ultimate moral and intellectual problems with which man has wrestled since the dawn of history. A concluding chapter discusses the role of religion in the modern world, and the possibility of evaluating competing religious faiths.

As an introduction this volume seeks to initiate the thoughtful general reader, who may have been confused about the meaning of "religion," into something of an understanding as to what religion is all about. It may serve the college student as a survey of a field of thought and activity which has been, and is, of tremendous cultural and social significance. Either type of reader who proceeds no farther even than this discussion should thereby be better able to interpret religion to himself and to his fellows. Or he may find here, the author hopes, only the beginning of a path that will take him on to further and more specialized investigations in an immensely rich and varied field, as well as to a better understanding of his own faith and religious tradition.



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PART I

WHAT IS RELIGION?

# SECTION I

## INTRODUCTORY

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### *Chapter I*

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#### EVERYWHERE, ONE, AND MANY

##### 1. *Religion Is Universal*

Whatever in the course of this discussion we may decide the true nature of religion to be, one generalization can be made at the very beginning: it is a major concern of human beings. It crops up at every turn of human life. Most conversations sooner or later touch upon it, directly or indirectly, unless they are so very short that there is no time to get down to fundamentals. Or it may be that the conversers have deliberately excluded it from consideration by specializing on a nonreligious subject such as mathematics, atomic structures, or an analysis of Chinese dialects. Yet even in these cases religion is not very far off, and may unexpectedly intrude itself, if only by the very indirect route of profane expression. Possibly the comment of Mrs. Thirdborn in Shaw's *Buoyant Billions*, when she protests to the objecting family solicitor that "God keeps butting in somehow,"<sup>1</sup> might be universally applied to human conversation if we should read "religion" in place of "God."

As for those more extended and formal conversations that are carried on through writing, they are riddled with the subject. A truly voluminous amount has been written about religion in every literate culture. Any general library of more than a few score volumes will usually contain numbers of books which, by title or substance or both, deal with religion in one fashion or another. Among others there will be copies of the sacred sayings or holy books of a religion, expositions of a particular expression of religion, or disputations of one religionist with another as to the essence or meaning of the true religion. There will be those who ardently favor this thing called religion in one or more of its

<sup>1</sup> Dodd, Mead and Co., 1951 p. 37.



forms, and others who as violently oppose it in every form. There will also be the detached observations of the student or traveler who reports in scientific mood upon what he has seen and heard of religion at home or abroad. And in a multitude of other books, from crime stories that stage the murder in a churchyard to real-estate statistics concerning the value of church properties in a community, there will be references of all sorts to religion and religious institutions.

But not all the references to religion are to be found in conversations and books. There is the thing itself in concrete manifestation in the world. Whatever people mean by the word—and the meanings seem to be almost as many as the people who talk or write about it—they are certain that they are referring to something that actually exists in identifiable form. Though everyone in a given group would have a different definition of the word itself, he would still be able to point to some specific activity or experience and say: That is religious.

There are the religious buildings in nearly every community, for example, which are variously called churches, cathedrals, synagogues, mosques, tabernacles, temples, gospel halls, or meetinghouses. Though some of them look much like the adjacent structures, as a rule they have both a distinctive architectural pattern visible from the outside and distinctive furnishings within. Steeples, bells, spires, statuary, stained-glass windows, pipe organs, altars, hymn and prayer books, special seats called pews, pulpits, lighted candles—all these (and more) seem to belong peculiarly to religious buildings and to no other.

And then there is also the matter of the distinctive type of behavior which goes along with such buildings and their furnishings. Though it is true that at certain times of the week or year one might be tempted to think that some of these religious buildings were restaurants, recreation centers, old-clothes markets, or carnival headquarters, there is also at regular intervals a type of activity called "worship" that is peculiar to these places. The form of worship will vary widely from building to building, even within the same small community, but despite all its variations we are able to distinguish this religious behavior from nonreligious activities as the rule.

Nor is this matter of religion confined to what goes on in a house of worship, though perhaps it is most easily identified there. Indeed, many people will very earnestly tell you that their particular variety of religion has nothing to do with such goings-on, and they take every opportunity to dissociate themselves from public worship. Yet they are sure that they are as "religious" in their manner of living as those who publicly worship; they may even insist that they are more truly religious than performers of public religious acts.

Nor is any one section of the world peculiar in this respect. Our Western world has no monopoly on religion. Indeed there are those who, despite all our



churches and outward forms of religious observance, severely criticize the West because it is not religious enough. They say that the West is secular or non-religious, materialistic rather than truly spiritual. Such critics often point with pride to their civilizations in North Africa, the Middle East, or the Orient, where religion enters into social, political, and cultural life far more pervasively than it does here, where every phase of public and private life is permeated through and through with religion. We have a truly spiritual culture and civilization, they would say, not the mere shell of it as you have in the West.

Can we then say that religion is universal to humanity? It would seem so. To be sure, there are some who have partially denied its universality. Some anthropologists, for example, incline to the opinion that various primitive peoples of the Western Pacific or perhaps the African areas have no explicit religion. Several reasons for this negative opinion might be given. In some cases it would seem to mean only that a premature conclusion has been drawn on the basis of superficial evidence. Because of the difficulty that attends intercommunication among individuals from different cultures, and because of the natural reluctance on the part of those who are being observed to share their most sacred and secret beliefs and customs with outsiders, the first searchings for a people's true religion may result in a negative finding. Later and more thorough acquaintance has many times changed the denial of the presence of religion in a culture into an affirmation.

Probably the real difficulty, however, has to do with definition. What do we mean by religion? or more particularly, what does anyone who judges whether or not another has genuine religion, mean by the word? Very often when one person declares that another has no religion he is only saying that the other's ideas and practices do not agree with his own. Particularly is this the case if we attempt to gain agreement on the question of which religion is the right or true one. But even with the most general description or definition of religion the same applies. Those from a well-defined religious and cultural context are peculiarly liable to a mistaken judgment about the more primitive forms of culture. It may be that a particular idea of gods or God is not to be found; or that some of the external marks of religious organization or ritual are lacking; or that the religious and the magical elements seem nearly indistinguishable; or that the level of religious thought and conduct seems morally unworthy to the observer. He will be tempted to say, and often has said: "There is no religion here." Actually such an opinion reveals more about the observer than the observed.

Whatever our difficulties in reducing religion to definable proportions may turn out to be, it can be said at any rate that it makes as much sense to say that man is the religious animal as to say that he is the laughing, story-telling,



or tool-making animal. That is to say, religious behavior is as truly distinctive of man when compared to other living creatures as are any of the other activities that are allegedly peculiar to him. Even though we must deny to man a "religious instinct," we can say that apparently wherever the distinctively human qualities of self-consciousness, purposive behavior, and the deliberate construction of social organization, rational thought, and cultural patterns appear, there the religious quality of thought and action is also to be found. It grows up side by side with all man's other interests, and initially is closely related to them all.

If the religious quality of life cannot be as clearly distinguished at the primitive level as it is later in cultural history, and if the primitive is not always explicitly aware that he *is* religious, neither is he aware that he is artistic, or a tool-maker, or a story-teller as such. Yet he is all of them. And if there are those who are not specifically or discernibly religious at higher levels of culture, so also there are those who never seem to laugh, but yet are human. Many of the irreligious within higher cultures are in revolt against some particular religion in terms of its specific beliefs and institutions. A little investigation will often reveal that they too have articles of faith that cannot be proved, supreme values that they reverence—often as not borrowed without acknowledgment from organized religions—and fundamental guiding convictions about the nature of life. A better way to spot "religious" behavior, than that of asking directly, "What is your religion?" would be to observe what performs the essential religious functions for the nonreligious person, and what elements of his life do for him the same things that religion does for those who profess it.

## 2. *Religion Is Many*

In any case religion seems to be one of those items about which everyone has an idea, an opinion, or perhaps of which he has an experience of some sort. He believes that he can identify it as religion, though he might find it hard to define, and would disagree about its meaning with everyone else present. Yet just because of this variation of opinion about its nature, it often makes more sense to speak in the plural of "religions" than in the singular of "religion," because the latter seems to suggest a nonexistent general practice or quality of experience. Actually most of our firsthand experiences of religion are in the plural, of one specific religion over against another, rather than of any pervasive unity which we might truly call religion.

Consider, for instance, the varied attitude of different individuals toward religion. Some describe it *in toto* as a malignant disease and hurtful superstition, to be got rid of as soon as possible. In this vein Charles Gorham writes a little booklet entitled *Religion as a Bar to Progress*. On the other side Reinhold



Niebuhr answers affirmatively in his book the question which he raises in the title, *Does Civilization Need Religion?* Are these two men with such diverse opinions speaking about the same thing when they talk of "religion"? In fact there is great variety of belief even among those who are favorable to religion. Among the devotees of the hundreds of variant religious patterns one may distinguish Christians, Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists, Shintoists, Jews, and each of these in many subvarieties; and the faithful in each of these divisions tend to look with pity, condescension, or even horror on those who are believers in another faith. And beyond all the pros and cons are the neutrals who are in favor of sitting it out while religions fight among themselves for the advantage.

Some of this difference of opinion about religion is a matter of individual experience and character. One man is born in a slum, another in a palace; one is born in the Occident and his brother in the Orient; one is of a dark race, his fellow of a light race. Two persons born side by side, even twins in the same family, may vary remarkably in temperament and viewpoint. Such differences of mental constitution, personal experience, and emotional character are bound to result in a variety of viewpoints with regard to almost everything, including religion. Whatever subject they might consider would turn out differently for each person.

Yet the diversity of religion is not just the diversity of individual attitude toward the same item. The religions themselves are a startling array of variant practice and belief. If one but steps out of the familiar backyard of his own faith (or lack of it) by travel or study, he finds himself in a veritable jungle or zoo of religious specimens. Each of these specimens, no matter how strange it seems to others, is called or has been called by some people at some time a true religion, perhaps even the one and only true religion in the world. And the further one looks in history or the more he travels over the face of the earth, the greater the variety and confusion.

Here are a few examples of religious variation. The ancient Aztec sacrificed human beings on occasion, cutting out at the climax of the act of worship the pulsing heart of the victim bound on the altar, while the Jain of India will not knowingly harm even a louse, mosquito, or the living root of a plant. The Egyptians tried to immortalize the human body by mummification, that it might serve as a familiar point of reference for the occasional return of the departed spirit; the Christian (not quite so successfully) seeks to preserve his dead by concrete vaults and metal caskets for less obvious reasons; most Hindus burn their dead on funeral pyres floating on a river; and the Parsee places the bodies of the faithful dead in "towers of silence," open to the sky, for vultures to consume.



To extend the table of differences a little further: the ancient Greeks worshipped some of their gods through alcoholic intoxication, being thereby taken out of themselves and filled with the power of the god. Sexual intercourse with the temple priestess was often viewed in the same light. On the other hand Buddhist and Christian have set a high value on sexual purity; perpetual celibacy for both men and women has been accorded a saintly quality, while drunkenness is condemned out-of-hand. Early Buddhism taught that the world was evil, or at least illusory, and was to be escaped; the Christian divides his energies by trying to make this world into the kingdom of God and simultaneously achieve heaven in the next life; Psychiana, a home-grown American sect, believes that true religion brings the God-power to us in health and prosperity here and now. The Mohammedan prays five times daily toward Mecca, and abhors images and saints; the Roman and Greek Orthodox Catholics worship by elaborate, colorful pageantry in the sacrament of the Mass, adorn their churches with images, icons, and pictures, and venerate the saints; the Protestant, who avoids imagery as strenuously as the Moslem, considers himself a better Christian than the Catholic, more truly religious than the Moslem, yet worships a Triune God, which the latter regards as idolatrous.

Such differences might be described indefinitely. But without going further, we may note another point: each religionist seems to attach great, even supreme, importance to his differences from those of other faiths. He speaks of those of other faiths as pagans, unbelievers, heathens, infidels, heretics, or the unenlightened. Any one of the many different sects within the same faith, as for instance Protestant denominations, will suggest that the other denomination no doubt has its partial truth, but not the full gospel that the speaker possesses. Items like baptismal rites (immersion or sprinkling), the sacramental washing of feet, baptism by the Spirit and speaking in tongues, ordination of the ministry by special rites, forms of church government, and many other doctrines or usages have been sufficient to divide one church from another, create new sects, and perpetuate for centuries serious religious divergences. Indeed, in the West these differences have even led to religious wars and riots, particularly among Catholic, Protestant, Jew, and Moslem. In the East there has been serious conflict between Moslem and Hindu, though there the more usual way to compose religious differences is to speak of truth as realized on different levels or reached by different routes, allowing each one to cherish his own as perhaps the higher or superior faith, but encouraging wide tolerance of the other's way. In general, however, it can be said, East or West, that religion is more capable than any other force in human life of generating fanatical enthusiasm for one's own peculiar view.

### 3. *Religion Is One*

Yet this appearance of confusion, strife, and utter diversity is by no means the whole picture. For after his first amazement at religious differences is abated, the observer will begin to sense that there are similarities as well, that in this jungle that is religion some of the trees are in many features like other trees. He will have a haunting sense of familiarity when he observes a "new" religious practice or hears a "new" religious doctrine, somewhat like encountering a stranger who reminds him of someone he has known before, or like half-recognizing a familiar theme in a strange musical composition.

Even a very superficial examination of differing religions will show striking similarities. For example, religions at all levels show an awareness of more-than-human power, though they variously conceive it. "If Europe has its Wheat-mother and its Barley-mother, America has its Maize-mother and the East Indies their Rice-mother."<sup>2</sup> And the ways in which those gods or powers are served are not unlike. Such practices as prayer, sacrifice, incantation, the use of incense, chants, bells, and images, the presence of medicine men, witch doctors, priests, and ministers to supervise or conduct the rites are widespread through the world's religions.

Certain themes may be found to appear again and again at many different levels of religion. James Frazer finds in many places the practice of purification before partaking of sacred food, with the same underlying purpose in each case:

Of all the modes of purification adopted on these occasions, none perhaps brings out the sacramental virtue of the rite so clearly as the Creek and Seminole practice of taking a purgative before swallowing the new corn. The intention is thereby to prevent the sacred food from being polluted by contact with common food in the stomach of the eater. For the same reason Catholics partake of the Eucharist fasting; and among the pastoral Masai of Eastern Africa the young warriors, who live on meat and milk exclusively, are obliged to eat nothing but milk for so many days and then nothing but meat for so many more. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Here then is a similar practice, which appears in varied outer forms as far apart as among Seminole Indians, Roman Catholics, and East African Masai, though in none of these cases was there any direct influence of one religion on the other. It is an example of a common theme growing out of the religious response of man to his environment, more or less the same everywhere.

Indeed, it would be just as easy to study religions in their likenesses as in their

<sup>2</sup> Sir James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Macmillan, one vol., abridged ed., 1935, p. 412.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 487f.



differences. In the preface to the book just quoted, Frazer tells how he began his studies of religion by trying to explain the rule that regulated the succession of the priesthood of Diana at Aricia. Twelve volumes and thirty years later he was still exploring the likeness-in-difference among religions into which his initial study had finally led him.

Another facet of the similarity of religions is illustrated by the striking parallelism of religious teachings throughout the world. Ernest R. Hume has compiled a *Treasure House of the Living Religions* in which he puts side by side the like teachings of many different religions. In such a work we discover that love, self-denial, sacrifice, patience, humility, and the like are common to many faiths. For example, Confucius had his "Silver Rule," in which he tells his followers to do nothing to others they would not want done to them, to compare with Christianity's "Golden Rule." All the faiths seek to overcome the morally evil life and to achieve the good with the help of faithful men and the supernatural powers they serve; and nearly all of them have some belief in a life beyond this one which we now live.

Still another way of emphasizing the likeness of differing religions is to notice, as we shall do in detail later, that they are all ways of salvation, ways in which men seek to escape from sin, suffering, and death. In nearly all of them this salvation is sought by the same main high roads: mysticism, or the direct awareness of God or Everlasting Being; works, or the doing of meritorious deeds; and devotion, or the winning of salvation by faith and love. And those who follow these ways in their different religions so devotedly that they are called saints, whether Buddhist, Moslem, or Christian, show a surprising likeness of spirit and life: they are serene, self-disciplined, and compassionate.

#### 4. *Prospectus for Study*

Both impressions of religion, as diverse and as one, are therefore justified. Religion is one and it is many; it is diverse and yet the same; it is both strange and familiar; it is separated from the rest of life and yet rooted and grounded in it, expressing its essence. Religion is unity-in-diversity and diversity-in-unity. Like the banyan tree, which starts from a single seed, grows one trunk, but drops down creepers from its branches, each creeper in turn becoming a trunk, and the whole making up a thicket or even a small forest, so religion has many trunks or individual forms. But nick the wood anywhere and the same sap flows through all.

We shall attempt to observe this double character of religion, as being one and many at the same time, in our use of the words relating to it. "Religion" will be employed to indicate that we are considering religions as in some sense a wholeness; as some sort of unity, at least, in contrast to the other areas of life;



or in terms of their actual likenesses to each other; or sometimes mainly for convenience in discussion. "Religions" will usually mean that we are thinking of the varied ways in which religion is expressed in its different thought or life-patterns and historic institutions. "Religionist" will refer to the professionally religious person, such as minister, priest, monk, or theologian, as a rather clumsy substitute for the neat French expression *religieux* (or *religieuse*); the terms "faithful," "devotee," or "religious man" will indicate anyone who believes in a religion and practices it.

This double character of religion as one and many makes different people unhappy in different ways. Those who are for religion-in-general as against unbelief-in-general are grieved that the religious witness to a spiritual reality or universal moral standard should be so divided, even contradictory. Why do ideas of God or the standards of sexual morality vary so widely if religion is true? On the other hand, those who are followers of one faith, *e.g.* the Christian, have been distressed to discover that non-Christian faiths also have similar moral standards, conceptions of world-beginnings, ideas of God, accounts of the virgin birth of their founders, or incarnate saviours. To them it has seemed to detract from the truth and uniqueness of their own faith. It has opened them to the taunts of nonbelievers who can and do point out that the Christian faith has no monopoly on a particular doctrine or may even have derived it from another faith.

Whatever answers we may individually make to such questions, in our study here we must bear in mind that both unity and diversity are facts in the religious history of mankind; and whether we are devoted to one faith or none, remembrance of this twin fact will save us from distorted ideas on the subject. It cannot be said on the one hand that any one religion is absolutely unique. If it were, it could not communicate with other faiths or hope to win those of other faiths to its fold. Also, to be religion, it must deal with the same basic human problems that other religions do. But on the other hand neither can it be said that all religions are the same, that religious differences are only trivial. There is indeed no common denominator of a neutral sort that makes all religions alike. Different religions have given different answers to human questions, have provided different emphases in living. And some of these are so basically different that they radically divide religions from each other.

How then, in view of this situation, shall we deal with religion and religions fairly? Three possible positions would seem to be open: the neutral and objective approach; the friendly but not committed; the committed one of belief in a particular religious faith.

The first position makes an immediate appeal to a "scientific" age. Let us observe all religions equally, impartially, describing them as they are, making



no valuations of good, bad, better, true or false. Surely the truth, whatever that may be, will be thus arrived at. But there are at least two difficulties here. One is that this neutral attitude is not really neutral. It is questionable, in fact, whether a person *can* be entirely neutral, for religion deals with the basic issues of life, interpretations of the universe, and fundamental moral attitudes toward oneself, one's fellow, society, and the world at large. Even the objectivist must espouse some attitude in these areas; or if he espouses no particular one, this too is an attitude in itself—an agnostic attitude which will perchance pick the nearest thing at hand to serve as its supreme value in place of religion. Then, too, such an attitude, implicitly or explicitly, often rules religion out as beneath serious consideration, as a sort of never-never land in which questions of worth or truth cannot be meaningfully dealt with. Here again a fundamentally biased (though professedly neutral) attitude is taken, a judgment made about basic truths and values.

The other objection is that a person outside religion cannot adequately understand or criticize religion because he does not know what it is all about. He will be like a man who was never in love trying to describe or understand why people act so foolishly when they are in that condition. He will not be able to separate the important from the unimportant, or to know where the center of the proper emphasis lies. He will probably avoid some of the fanaticism that often goes with religion, and be able to point out inconsistencies—a needed service; but the inner essence of the thing itself will escape him.

We are left then with the two insider's views. And the person who is generally in favor of religion as opposed to irreligion—maybe even religion of any sort as opposed to irreligion of any sort—seems to have the advantage. He is one who feels, sympathizes, has a desire to interpret religion in a friendly fashion; yet he is removed from the heat and passion of a particular credo or institutional loyalty. But here too something is lacking. It is like the case of a man who has read love stories, knows just the sort of woman he could and would love if he ever met her, but has never quite arrived at being in love because he has never met the ideal woman. He too is actually an outsider. For there is no such thing in actual existence as religion-in-general, but only particular, specific religions. Perhaps there is no such person as one who is religious-in-general. One is probably either religious, actually praying to some God or meditating on some supreme reality, preferring one religious fellowship to another, accepting some formulation of his basic faith, and standing for some set of moral values, or he is nothing at all in the religious sense. In fact, even though he be irreligious he cannot logically avoid taking some attitude about fundamental issues—though he may prefer to be illogical.

We are then left with the third position, that of the adherent of one particular



faith who tries to discuss other faiths. He has the advantages of being on the inside, the true inside. Being in love, he will know how to understand something of another's being in the same situation, though he may not approve the object of the other's love. He will be hard put to it to avoid unfairness; he will constantly tend to judge other religions in the light of his own, comparing their actualities and failures with the ideals and hoped-for realizations of his own faith. Perhaps he may never attain "objectivity," whatever that means here. But he will be able to penetrate to the centrally important features of another religion; understanding his own faith he will be able to understand the other, even if by contrast or somewhat partial comparison; he will know the depth of another faith in a way that the nonreligionist never can.

Difficult as it is, therefore, we cannot avoid the valuation of religions, either explicit or implicit. For if all ideas about anything, including religions, are equally good, valuable, and true, either we are talking about nothing, or else all such ideas are equally false, worthless, and evil. And perhaps avowed valuations are better than unavowed ones. The author cannot escape his own. Having been reared in and accepting the Christian faith, his approach to religion and religions will be colored by that faith. Yet even the religious man may consciously seek to be fair and to approach sympathetically faiths other than his own, with the hope that his "inside" view will perhaps enable him to interpret them the better.

## SECTION II

# THE UNITY OF RELIGIONS

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### Chapter II

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#### THE BEGINNINGS OF RELIGION

In our opening chapter the diversity-in-unity of religions was hastily sketched. But no mere acknowledgment of the situation is enough; we must further describe and define the ways in which religions are both the same and different, if we are to understand the nature of the complexities involved.

Even though it is the religious differences that impress themselves on us when we first survey the field, it will be best to begin with the similarities. Guided by landmarks which may be at least semifamiliar, we may avoid some of the confusions attendant on travel in strange surroundings. Still further, when we do come to examine the differences in more detail, we shall have something of a pattern into which to fit them.

One way that has often been taken is to try to find the unity of religion in terms of common origins. We can clearly see that religious variations come into being constantly. In the United States religious sects seem to multiply with the rapidity of yeast cells in a favorable environment. And even the briefest survey of religious history shows that Catholics and Protestants split off from each other in the 16th century, that Islam (or Mohammedanism) grew out of a Christian-Jewish environment in the 7th century, that Buddhism grew out of Hinduism, that Hinduism is divided into a multitude of sects, and so on almost *ad infinitum*. Clearly there must have been a time when there were only a few religions, or possibly only one religion. If we could find that one, then we should know what the essence of all religions is. We should possess a "pure" sample of religion at its very beginnings, before any of the confusing details had been added.



### 1. *Difficulties in the Study of Origins*

Alluring as this prospect is in theory, actually there are some serious road blocks in the way. There are immense practical difficulties. One may be able rather easily to read the record of the earth's history in the rocks; he may possibly reconstruct the biological history of mankind from his observations of fossil remains and presently living creatures. But the materials for the reconstruction of the history of religions, particularly those that go back into prehistoric antiquity, are much more difficult to handle. The records we possess by way of documents, customs, archeological remains, and the like do not carry us very far back along the road. They are all products of rather recent historical periods; and their interpretation is difficult.

For example, Max Müller, a well-known Anglo-German student of religions during the past generation, and editor of the famous series of *Sacred Books of the East*, believed that he had found a clue to the beginnings of religion in the use of some of the same names for different gods throughout the Indo-European religions. These common names come from linguistic roots meaning sky, earth, sun, moon, fire, thunder, and so on. From this undoubted fact he constructed a complete theory of the evolution of religion and its gods, which was essentially that of a gradual transformation of nature forces into gods. It is now recognized that Müller relied too heavily on his word studies, for borrowed words do not always mean borrowed ideas or customs; and later anthropological studies emphasize the variety of religious derivations rather than their uniformity.

Another kind of difficulty that plagues us in our search for origins is found in the nature of religious history. We should like to think that religion flows smoothly and directly from simple beginnings to its present complicated forms. But straight channels and a steady flow do not actually mark its course; on the contrary it is one of many twistings and turnings, filled with eddies, backwaters, and unexpected rapids. Some religions may have degenerated from their former fervor and purity; others seem to be expanding and developing; still others remain stratified and ingrown. Nor can we rightly presume that two religions seemingly similar in general teaching and structure have arrived at their like state by the same route. There may well have been too many outside influences and surprising developments from within to chart similar courses. In a word, there is no uniform type of evolution, say from primitivism to polytheism to monotheism, which we can trace in the history of all religions.

It is therefore probably beyond our powers ever to isolate an absolutely primitive form of religious life—religion in its first makings, so to speak. One can find individuals who first become religious at a given time, but the religion



they espouse is not their brand-new creation. They have adopted an already existing pattern. Even the great founders of religions—Moses, Buddha, Mahavira, Jesus, Mohammed—did not create a faith out of nothing or work in a vacuum. And so it is all along the line. Religions, at whatever stage we observe them, or in whatever relation, grow out of former religions. Even the most primitive of primitive men believes in traditions and customs that have come down to him from dim past ages beyond the memory of living man and that may have existed as they now exist for many generations. He may be a primitive but he is no pioneer.

But let us suppose that we *were* able to isolate an absolutely primitive form of religious life—the very first religion of all. What would it tell us of the “true” nature of religion? Nothing at all but that religion began in this or that form, and took these or those as first basic ideas. All that we should have gained would be a picture of a very primitive way of thinking and acting on the part of a very primitive people. What would it prove about religion or religions today? Again, next to nothing.

Attention is called to this point because it is often made the basis of a judgment on the worth or unworth of religion as such. In the next pages we shall observe some theories which propose to derive religion from fear, wish fulfillment, or magic, and then go on to imply: You see what kind of an inferior thing religion really is. The obvious answer is that we must judge religion, like other disciplines of life, in terms of fruits and not roots. We may equally well point out that astronomy came from astrology, chemistry originated in alchemy, and that medical science began with the medicine man and his magic; yet the crudity of their early forms does not affect the worth of these sciences today.

But if the hope of finding religious origins is both illusory and somewhat unprofitable, what can we then gain from an observation of theories of religious origins that go to the primitive religions for their materials? We shall gain some knowledge of those elements of primitive religion that are common to most of its forms and thus be aware of the earlier, if not the very first, forms of religion. And though these common primitive elements are thus at least one remove from absolute religious origins, and do not prove that all known religions have possessed just these elements at one time or other, they are probably similar in general form to what could have been found in the simpler and earlier days in many a religious faith. Further, by comparison and contrast to more developed religions, we shall learn something more of the religious quality of life in its many and varied forms. And, finally, it will familiarize us with some of the contemporary ideas of religion that we shall meet from time to time in other studies and help us better to evaluate them.

## 2. *Depreciatory Theories of Religious Origins*

The theories sketched in this section have one thing in common: they join in casting aspersions on the pedigree of religion. They allege that all religion (or religions) originated in a single source of inferior or unworthy quality; they seek to unify religions by reducing them all to a primal least common denominator of rather despicable nature. And the obvious inference—though not always drawn—is that all religion at whatever stage of development is in essence the same as at its crudest beginnings.

### a. *Fear as the Parent of Religion*

That sometimes discerning, sometimes imperceptive, writer on religions, Lewis Browne, has written the following passage, a classic of its kind:

In the beginning there was fear; and fear was in the heart of man; and fear controlled him. At every turn it whelmed over him, leaving him no moment of ease. With the wild soughing of the wind it swept through him; with the crashing of the thunder and the growling of the lurking beasts.

All the days of man were gray with fear, because all his universe seemed charged with danger. Earth and sea, sea and sky were set against him; with relentless enmity, with inexplicable hate, they were bent on his destruction. At least so primitive man concluded. . . .

Of one thing he seemed most stubbornly convinced: that *some* spell would work. Somehow the hostile things around him *could* be appeased or controlled, he believed; somehow death *could* be averted. Why he should have been so certain no one can tell. It must have been his instinctive adjustment to the conditions of a world that was too much for him. Self-preservation must have forced him to that certainty, for without it self-preservation would have been impossible. Man had to have faith in himself or die.

So he had faith—and developed religion.<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that fear is a very common ingredient in human life. It is questionable, however, whether it is more prevalent among primitives than among civilized peoples. To be sure, there are many things which the primitive cannot control or understand, but neither does he ask as much of life as his civilized brother. Hence he has not as many vital interests that are threatened by the increased hazards of his situation, nor fears to lose as much through life's dangers. And many primitives, before they are infected with civilized diseases and troubles, seem actually to be quite happy if judged by appearances.

But even allowing a greater measure and a more elemental quality of fear to the primitive than to his civilized brother, there is a deeper difficulty. Fear ac-

<sup>1</sup> *This Believing World*, Macmillan, 1926, pp. 27-29.



companies many experiences of life besides the religious ones. On any level of life there are many natural fears—of accidents, one's fellow man, beasts, and the like, that have nothing specifically to do with religion. It is of course true that religion or magic was looked on as a help in overcoming all sorts of dangers; but fear is too generalized an emotion to produce singlehandedly such a specific and complex response as religion. Such a theory seems to be a gross over-simplification.

There is probably a psychological error involved here also. It seems difficult to believe that such abject terror as Browne pictures in the primitive man could produce such positive results. The mere fact that one fears does not automatically produce the antidote to fear. Fear would rather tend to exaggerate threatening dangers. To suggest that the desire for self-preservation produced positive elements out of the midst of an atmosphere of unrelieved fear seems hardly credible; it sounds too much like a twentieth-century theorizer reading his own ideas into the primitive mind. In any case emotions need some materials to work with, since they are derivative rather than originative; there would necessarily be some *hopeful* elements or hints of beneficent power manifested by their environment before primitives could imaginatively expand emotion into positive religion.

And finally there is here a misunderstanding of the word "fear" as applied to religion. There is undoubtedly an element of the fearful in religion at all levels. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," as the Old Testament puts it. But it is a specific variety of fear, better called *awe*. Rudolf Otto, in his *The Idea of the Holy*, has well expressed it as a compound of attraction and repulsion. One fears (reverences, respects) God, yet loves Him. Isaiah the prophet in his vision of God cries out, "Woe is me"; yet the total experience concludes with his voluntary acceptance of a prophetic mission to his people to prepare them to serve God. Peter on his knees entreats the miracle-working Jesus to depart from him, because he (Peter) is a sinful man, but immediately rises to follow him.

This dual quality of the positive and the negative, of the fearsome and the attractive, signified by *awe*, is characteristic of religion throughout all its forms. From it as a center grow all religious life and institution. On the primitive level it is expressed by the concept of *mana* (positive power) and *taboo* (negative restriction) which together signify a valuable power to be found in certain things and persons, which must be handled rightly if relations to it are to be beneficial. On the more advanced levels awe expresses itself in forms of worship and ideas of gods or God. The positive or attractive side of the dual concept flowers into the hope of the possibility of genuine personal fellowship with the gods, the conviction of their moral goodness and of their revelation of themselves to their worshipers, and empowerment for the good life. The negative



element is expressed in a sense of "otherness" in the universe (the strange, forbidding, nonhuman) which changes into the doctrine of God's wrath against sin, His holiness, and His demand for righteousness. The two together make up what we call the religiously awesome, a specific blend of qualities far different from simple fear.

b. *Religion as Wish-fulfillment*

With the widespread use of psychological jargon, this explanation of religious origins has become popular. The emotional mechanism indicated by the ancient adage that the "wish is father to the thought" is here given a major role in the formation of religion. Human life, it is said, in seeking to fulfill its desires finds itself thwarted in all directions. Hard physical conditions and limitations constrict man on every side; ideals and dreams are broken again and again by forces over which man has no control; parents find themselves set against children as against enemies, and vice versa; natural impulses of all sorts are inhibited by social conventions.

The facts of man's situation are thus against him. But his wishes will not be denied—so runs the theory—so that he fabricates an illusory but comforting world in which there are powers to aid him; a supreme and loving Heavenly Father who offers him companionship when human beings shun him, solace when they misunderstand him, and promises him compensation in a life to come for disappointments suffered here. Sometimes the inhibited impulses, not allowed expression in society, are given expression in erotic ritual or mystical religious literature. Thus through religion man goes about the business of fulfilling his heart's desire, half unconsciously and in distorted forms; by this "necessary illusion" he keeps for himself a measure of happiness and sanity.

Sigmund Freud, the originator of psychoanalysis, had his particular version of this theory which we shall also examine in another connection. According to him religion, like almost everything else in human culture and thought, originates in the Oedipus and associated complexes. A son is both jealous and fearful of his father, because his father sexually possesses his mother, but at the same time admires and loves him. Though hating his father the son feels guilty because he does; yet he is unable to restrain himself from either love or hate, and continual emotional conflict results. Thus (says Freud) religions originated in some primitive situation in which the sons combined to kill their father that they might possess his wives and concubines, but felt so guilty after the murder that they refrained from such possession, and in addition, through religious rites, repented of their deed.

. . . religion had issued from the sense of guilt of the sons as an attempt to palliate this feeling and to conciliate the injured father through subsequent obedience. All later religions prove to be attempts to solve the same problem, varying only in ac-

cordance with the stage of culture. . . . They are all, however, reactions aiming at the same great event with which culture began and ever since has not let mankind come to rest.<sup>2</sup>

Religion, in other words, is a symbolic washing of the hands in expiation of a prehistoric crime. The memory of the victim of the crime has been elevated to the status of God (powerful, dominating, yet loving and just), and the whole apparatus of ritual worship has been evolved around this central complex.

With regard to Freud's particular form of the theory of wish-fulfillment, it might be noted that the existence of a subconscious racial memory of a long-hidden deed and subsequent guilt feelings, is dubious. So too, though he catches well the mixed emotional quality of religious awe, his basing of all that ails or blesses mankind psychologically on the Oedipus and other sexual complexes is recognized by most psychologists as an obvious exaggeration.

With regard to the matter of religion as wish-fulfillment in general, we must truthfully say that—as anyone can observe—there is considerable of it in religion. Long ago a Greek writer noted that each nation made its gods in its own image; and animals would no doubt do the same if consulted. The religious man tends to interpret the course of his life in its more favorable aspects as a case of divine intervention, and to neglect or discount the less favorable. Greek travelers who survived shipwreck erected tablets of thanksgiving to the gods, but took no account of those who were lost. John Bunyan, who had stooped when an enemy shot passed over him and killed another soldier, believed that *he* had been miraculously saved, but seemed little concerned about his dead comrade-in-arms. And most of us know persons who maintain their religion as a sort of dream life in which all the hopes denied them by reality are fulfilled by anticipation or imagination.

We should be less than honest to deny such facts, but also less than well-informed to point out that other areas of human life—or, better—human beings in other contexts than the religious, also cherish their wish-fulfillments. Especially is this true in all those areas that have to do with the ideal life of man, his hopes, his dreams and ambitions of any sort, and in his relationships to other people. Many others besides religious persons let their hope color the reality; but we do not suggest that for them the reality gains *all* its being from or originates in mere hopefulness. Even religious hopefulness may well have a genuine foundation to build upon.

But more important than such considerations is a factor that such interpreters usually overlook: the compulsive, coercive factor in religion. For side by side with the fact that some have sought comfort in religion, and that the offer of consolation is an intrinsic part of most faiths, there is the fact of religion as *demand*. This indeed is the way in which religion usually comes to the indi-

<sup>2</sup> *Totem and Taboo*, Moffat, Yard and Co., 1918, tran. A. A. Brill, p. 239.



vidual: as a claim that certain beings, or the nature of the universe as here discovered, make upon man. He must do certain deeds, or take specific attitudes, not by the compulsion of society alone or even at all, but by the inner compulsion of the reality that he apprehends in religion.

This compulsiveness may take several forms. There is its passive form, in the acceptance of parts of the world or the features of one's own situation as divinely willed, which produces the characteristic spirit of religious resignation. There is also the more active form. One finds it in the experience of worship, which, when genuine, is nearly always a "must" experience—the sense of an awesome power that impels the worshiper to bow down, whether he will or no. It is doubtful if men ever truly worship without this sense of inner compulsion. Or it may take the form of a religious and moral compulsion: the prophet, the reformer, the voluntary martyr, and the individual who takes an unpopular stand in terms of religious convictions, are examples of this. While these are the outstanding examples of the religiously compulsive factor, it is doubtful whether a way of life can ever be called religious if it totally lacks this compulsion. To go against appearances and disregard immediate comfort is of the essence of religion. Thus religion is often man's hardest way of gaining ease, and his most uncomfortable way of gaining comfort.

Indeed, more often than not, religion is criticized either for the supineness of its resignation to the *status quo* or its grimly moralistic frustration of natural human impulses; and sometimes by some of those who have just accused it of being wish-fulfillment. But it can scarcely be both. If it represents a discipline by which the individual learns to be reconciled to those features of the world that he cannot change, or to make more severe demands on himself in the name of his faith than are made by ordinary standards, he cannot be accused of using religion as a comforting sugar teat. John Baillie's words are to the point:

The truth is that the verities of religion are often very far from being what men want to believe. Much rather are they what men feel they *must* believe, whether they want to or not.<sup>3</sup>

### c. *Creation by Priestly Caste*

This less than half-truth has been tossed about from hand to hand for a considerable length of time. Thomas Hobbes, the English political theorist of the 17th century, was certain that religion could be explained as a plot on the part of power-hungry priests. The Deists, who were for religion-in-general derived from rational observation of the natural world, and who were against all particular faiths, often favored such a theory of religious origins. The Marxists of our own day have taken it up after their particular fashion by maintaining

<sup>3</sup> *Interpretation of Religion*, Scribner, 1928, p. 163.



that the priests, who originated religion for their own profit, have now become the tools of economic overlords.

It should be acknowledged that there is much in the actual history of religion to merit such a judgment. Religious institutions have often concentrated power in the hands of the clergy, and the latter have never been eager to relinquish it. Indian society has been ruled for centuries by the priestly caste, the Brahmins, who jealously guard their preferred status. Tibet, for an almost equal number of centuries, has been under the control of its monks, who comprise about a fifth of the population. Roman Catholicism, especially in its medieval period, has always been heavily priest-controlled. And Protestantism, which rebelled against this hierarchical structure, created its Bible commonwealth in New England, a church-state dominated by clerical influence, and even today maintains several European state churches.

But notwithstanding this pragmatic justification for such a reading of the case, such an explanation of religious origins is too easy. At least two important factors are left out of account. One is that of the width and depth of the religious life and response among men. If the human race has been widely deluded by a device foisted on them by a few clever and unscrupulous men, one might say that it has been willing to be deluded—even eagerly asking to be deceived. In any case the irrepressible vigor of religion, which recreates itself over and over again when old forms are destroyed, is far too massive and genuine a fact to be explained solely as the production of a small selfish clique.

The second factor overlooked by such an explanation is the role of the independently active layman in religion. This is scarcely observable at the primitive level in which individuality is swallowed up by the community; and nonprofessional activity has been largely suppressed in some of the elaborately organized faiths. Yet many of the notable founders of faiths—Buddha, Jesus, Zoroaster, and others—were not priests. The notable series of prophets in pre-Christian Hebrew religion was one composed entirely of laymen, who had no religious office or status beyond the power of their individual inspiration. Mahatma Gandhi wielded his tremendous power over Hinduism in a strictly personal and unofficial manner. Islam can scarcely be said, even today, to have a professional clergy in the strict sense of the word. And throughout the history of Christianity laymen have either been active in renewing the life of the church from within, or have formed new sects without the established institutions.

It may be said, in fact, that nearly all the significant religious pioneers have been nonprofessionals. Clergy as a rule, especially in their priestly role, have been conservators of other men's deeds and thoughts in ritual forms, not founders of new faiths or noteworthy innovators within old faiths.

## Chapter III

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### THE BEGINNINGS OF RELIGION (concluded)

#### 3. *Theories Based on the Nature of Primitive Religions*

Thus far we have been dealing with pseudo-theories of religious origins that were more anxious to discredit religion by ascribing its beginnings to fear, wish-fulfillment, or deception, than truly to explore the matter. The theories examined in this chapter are serious-minded ones that grow out of a very natural way of attacking the problem: the observation of still-surviving primitive religions—the more primitive the better. The Australian aborigines, some of whose customs we shall describe in later chapters, have been favorite case studies. The reasoning has been that the religion, or what perhaps serves as religion—the magic of these peoples—has remained the same through countless ages; hence their religion gives us a near approach to what must have been the first religious forms.

We should be reminded again of the difficulties discussed at the beginning of the previous chapter with regard to all study of religious origins, which apply here also. And to them we should add one further difficulty peculiar to this approach—the difficulty of valid observation. It is extremely easy for the sophisticated observer to read into the primitive experience his own valuations and ideas of the meaning of religious ritual, customs, and terms; and it is conversely extremely difficult to put oneself sympathetically into the primitive way of thinking or to appreciate primitive logic. The “civilized” observer often puts his questions or makes his observations in terms that are loaded—set up actually to give an answer or result of his own choosing. Suppose, for example, one is anxious to discover whether the primitive has an idea of gods or spirits. He will use the most nearly equivalent native term he knows. But the question remains: have he and the subject of his questions really meant the same by the same word? Or is it possible that the primitive, rather inarticulate but eager to please, may give an affirmative answer, agreeable but misleading? Such difficulties are not insuperable, but they warn us to be on our guard in making



dogmatic statements about what primitive peoples think or believe about religion.

a. *The High-God Theory*

One rather interesting theory was put forward not long since by Wilhelm Schmidt in his book *The Origin and Growth of Religion*. He begins from the top and comes down, so to speak. He believes that the first form of genuine religion was a worship of one high or supreme god, or at very most the worship of a few major gods. These high gods were no miscellaneous set of spirits, but had for the primitive much the same meaning that "God" has for us.

Such high gods were thought of as inhabiting the sky, though they were not the same as the sky; their form was not physical but spiritual (immaterial); their attributes were eternity of existence, beneficence, righteousness, and sometimes they were the creators and givers of the moral code. Later the lesser gods, demons, and ancestral spirits came crowding into primitive religions, much like brushwood growing up in an ancient forest of tall trees, and almost obscured the high gods from sight. At least one writer (Jevons) has found in the high gods evidence of an original monotheism spread over the whole earth.

If we ask Schmidt for his evidence for such an interpretation, he points to the continued presence of the high gods among some rather primitive peoples. Students of African and Asian primitives have come across terms such as "he that lives above," "the good old one," "the Most Mighty," and the like, which are used, though rather vaguely, of a god who is greater than the lesser spirits with whom most of the daily commerce is held. These terms, Schmidt would insist, are remnants of the original form of religion. And he denies that these beings even today are so shadowy and inconsequential that they can be said to have "retired into a leisured existence, showing neither activity nor interest in mankind."<sup>1</sup>

What shall we say of this theory of religious devolution from the higher to the lower? In support of the theory it may be said that anthropologists are acknowledging more than formerly the presence of some such element in primitive religions. The more obvious intercourse of primitives with lesser spirits has tended to obscure the role and importance of the high gods. And Schmidt's protest against the idea of a uniform evolution of the ideas and life of religion from the simple to the complex is justified, for it is also true that religions degenerate as well as progress.

But his case does not as yet seem conclusive unless more evidence is turned up. The presence of the high gods among modern primitives, according to the account of most anthropologists, is rather indecisive and unimportant, even if

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, Dial Press, 1931, p. 277.

it must be taken into account. Schmidt seems to exaggerate their importance and universality. The presence of the high-god conception probably indicates a natural explanation of the world that might occur to the primitive as well as to the civilized mind, along with other basic ideas. (Sometimes, too, it may be a far-off echo of Christian missionary teaching.) But because the primitive scarcely has a world view such a unified conception of God remains largely undeveloped. In any case it can hardly be called a satisfying clue to the origin of all religions; the uniformity of religious origin it suggests is scarcely more acceptable than that which it rejects.

b. *Magic as the First Form of Religion*

Schmidt's approach to religious origins has been out of step with that of most of his contemporaries. The more usual way to explain the origin of religion is to begin at the bottom and work up in terms of its evolution from more primitive forms. The following theories are all examples of that approach.

Magic is difficult to define, but the following definition by Noss will be serviceable: he suggests that we consider it "an endeavor through utterance of set words, or the performance of set acts, to control or bend the powers of the world to man's will."<sup>2</sup> He further suggests that though the materials relating to magic are immense in quantity, we may distinguish three main ways of exerting this control: shamanism, fetishism, and popular magic. A word may be spoken about each.

*Shaman*, derived from a Pali word meaning beggar monk, refers to the medicine-man, witch-doctor type of healer and magic-worker. The presence of shamans is widespread, from among the subarctic Eskimos of North America and similar peoples in Northern Asia, to the primitives of the Pacific and African regions. Shamans are considered to be spirit- or mana-possessed at times, and knowledgeable about many matters of secret lore handed down from practitioner to practitioner.

*Fetishism* is a device of the professional witch doctor or magician, though also somewhat independently practiced by the laity. Originally the term was applied to the use of small images or objects among West African primitives. It is now used to signify the belief of many primitives that supernatural powers dwell in material objects, usually small portable ones, and can be invoked by the proper use of the object or fetish. (Our amulets and charms are descendants of fetishism.) The fetish stands in an ambiguous position. When it is effective in securing desired results, such as the death of an enemy, recovery from a disease, or success in the hunt, it is praised and cherished; when ineffective, it

<sup>2</sup> John B. Noss, *Man's Religions*, Macmillan, 1949, p. 13.



is thought to have lost its virtue and may be cajoled, chastised, or discarded as the occasion warrants.

*Popular magic* is nonprofessional exercise of magical powers. Though the primitive may not know the deepest secrets of the shaman, whose services come only at a price, he knows some traditional ones of his own. He knows curses, spells, charms, and devices of various sorts that he believes are more or less effective in working his will. On the principle that "like begets like" he will seek to produce rain by beating drums in imitation of thunder, or fertility in family or herd by the use of symbols of procreation. Possession of an article of clothing, strand of hair, or likeness (image or picture) of another individual will give him power over that person. What he does symbolically to the object or image will occur in some form to the person whom it represents.

Now the relation of magic to religion and religious origins has been the subject of much discussion, which we cannot go into here. Frazer, to whom we have already referred, held that magic was a sort of preresigion, a primordial matrix out of which all religions probably developed. His theory is that after man had found his magic efforts failing to produce the desired effects, he turned to religious supplication; not being able to force the powers to accede to his desires, he turned to entreaty and prayer.

This particular theory seems hardly plausible. Is the efficacy of prayer any more demonstrable than that of magic? Roughly the same sort of logic would seem to apply to both. When the desired effects do follow, then the practice is given credit for the success; when they do not, then some reason for failure is sought. In the latter case it might be that a magic formula or rite was not properly done, or else insufficient earnestness and faith used in praying. At any rate magic seems to have held its own for long periods of time, obviously having produced sufficient results to satisfy its users.

The approach of Malinowski seems more fruitful for our understanding. He suggests that the primitive actually makes three distinctions: one, the actual skill which he well knows is necessary to his farming, hunting, or fishing. This he does not neglect or confuse with magic techniques. Two, the elements which cannot be so dealt with, but may be controlled by magic. Three, those which do not yield to magical control, but need religious treatment. This latter distinction, of course, becomes clearer as time goes on.

Probably in the very beginning of primitive culture, magic and religion cannot be so clearly distinguished as Malinowski suggests. They mingle their methods and viewpoints. Marett in his essay "From Spell to Prayer"<sup>3</sup> notes that the transition from the coercive frame of mind which belongs to magic

<sup>3</sup> In *The Threshold of Religion*, Macmillan, 1914.

(and later to science) to the entreating mood which is that of religion, is relatively easy in primitive life. From bluff to blandishment is not a long road, so that the Australian tribesman who begins by treating his spear to a spell before setting out to use it, may imperceptibly turn that spell into a prayer directed to the spear to achieve its purpose. In reverse, of the next day, spell may be used rather than prayer.

We shall do well to avoid the statement that religion grew out of magic. We might better speak of a religio-magic or a magico-religion, which contained the somewhat divergent elements that distinguished themselves from each other in time to come: mechanical coerciveness grew into magical, and later, scientific formulae; entreaty turned into religion and prayer.

### c. Totemism

Another candidate that has been put forward for the position of the unique form of the very earliest religion is totemism. A totem, to quote *Webster's Dictionary* (which in turn relies on Frazer), is "most commonly a class of plants or animals between which and himself the savage believes that a certain intimate relation exists."<sup>4</sup> This connection is sometimes taken to be one of blood relationship, like that of tribal descent from the totemic ancestor, or some attachment of peculiar significance for the tribe, as perhaps that of a guardian spirit or symbolic embodiment of the main food supply. Thus one Australian totem group takes to itself the witchetty grub, an important food item, as its totemic symbol.

Totemism is taken by different investigators to mean different things. Robertson Smith, a renowned student of Semitic religions, thought that the sacrificial practices so prevalent among primitives grew out of totemism. By eating the totem animal or plant on solemn occasions the worshiper thus communed with his totem-god, and gained something of godlike strength and qualities. Freud believes that the totem becomes the symbol for the father, thus explaining the mingled hostility and reverence toward it. And Durkheim, a prominent 19th century French sociologist whose particular theory we shall later note at length, holds that the totem is primarily a symbol of the group. For him totemism is the first form of religion, and its quality of group reverence the continuing basis of all religion, primitive or developed.

The variation of opinions about the meaning of totemism indicates both the varied ways in which it appears in religion and some uncertainty as to the facts about its actual role. No one explanation seems to fit all the facts. Not all students of the subject would agree with Smith that sacrifice is always to be ex-

<sup>4</sup> *Webster's New International Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1945.



plained in this way. And it is often doubtful whether the totem is eaten only on special occasions or never eaten at all. There is also the further question whether all so-called totemism has the same functional significance. The term itself is of North American Indian origin. It has been widely applied, to Australian tribes, to Egyptian animal worship, early Hebrew religion, and many other cases. But the conception has probably been over-applied. Because it cannot be found everywhere, even with the widest application of the term, and because many times its role is a minor one, we can scarcely find in it the first form of all religion.

Durkheim's particular theory, set forth in his *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, is worth a little more notice because of the great influence it has exerted. It might be termed a sociological theory of religious origins and significance. Based on studies of the Australians as one of the most primitive groups in existence, the theory states that totemism is the universal form of primitive religion, but that its main significance is found in its embodiment of the group spirit. Below is Durkheim's own statement:

The god of the clan, the totemic principle, can therefore be nothing else than the clan itself, personified and represented . . . to the imagination under the visible form of the animal or vegetable which serves as totem.<sup>5</sup>

This principle of reverence for the social group, instinctively adopted by the primitives under the symbolism of the totem, continues through all later religious development. The "god" that any religion worships is, in the final analysis, the group itself. Again:

In a general way, it is unquestionable that a society has all that is necessary to arouse the sensation of the divine in minds, merely by the power that it has over them; for its members it is what a god is to his worshippers. . . . It requires that, forgetful of our own interests, we make ourselves its servitors, and it submits us to every sort of inconvenience, privation, and sacrifice, without which social life would be impossible.<sup>6</sup>

Because this social pressure of the group is exercised in "spiritual" ways the religious individual comes to believe that it is "outside," or "beyond" him, and hence a god. Reverence for society is then religious in its outward form, but its content is social.

There is much to be said for the influence of society over the individual and its formative importance for him, especially in primitive life patterns. Yet in addition to the objections raised above against considering totemism to be the universal form of all early religion, Durkheim's particular explanation also fails

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, Macmillan, 1926, p. 206.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

at other points. Durkheim thought he was doing a service to religion by saying that there was something real in its conception of the object of worship, namely society. Faith thus worshiped a real being. But it should be said that faith thus worships under an illusion, and will worship only when it is thus deceived about its god. Let religious people know that they are worshiping only society, and they will cease to worship; for their worship is supposedly directed to the more-than-human.

And still further, Durkheim's emphasis on the importance of the group, due to his exclusively sociological approach, is an over-emphasis. It does not give due credit to the role of the individual in religion. And it is precisely at this point that religion has made its greatest strides forward: through individual deviations on the part of religious rebels who have set themselves in opposition to the group and its accepted standards. Indeed, individual deviationism has been the single greatest internal force for lifting religion from its primitive to its more advanced forms.

#### d. *Animistic Origins*

The term *animism* was made famous by E. B. Tylor, an English anthropologist of the 19th century, and Herbert Spencer, an English philosopher of scientific and religious interests. The term in general means simply animatedness or aliveness. It describes the vivid primitive awareness of the aliveness of all things in nature. This aliveness is conceived as the presence of individual, conscious spirits that animate or possess all objects and creatures in the natural world, including man. Because the primitive so universally conceives of all beings in nature as thus alive, the question naturally propounds itself: might not this personifying or vivifying of all objects by the primitive represent the origin of all religions? Are not religions mainly one in thus personalizing the world, even today?

That the tendency to consider everything alive in a spiritual sense, even trees, springs, stones, earth, and mountains, is widespread among primitives cannot be questioned. (Whether this aliveness is always conceived in the form of living personal spirits we may at a later point wish to doubt.) But if we ask how this animistic concept arose, the explanations vary. Many believe it had its origin in the experience of death: from the dead man some real but invisible force has gone. The conception of this as a "spirit" or "soul" inhabiting men, and ultimately every other living thing, thus made its way into human thought. Spencer indeed was willing to say that all religion arose in the form of the worship of the spirits of the ancestors, first merely honored in funeral rites, then promoted to the status of gods. The difficulty with this as a theory of religious origins is that ancestor worship has not been universal among primitives; and the



ancestral spirits, though revered, are usually conceived as dependent for even their shadow-existence on the sacrifices and services of the living, rather than as gods of independent power and existence. Ancestor worship seems to be an appendage or concomitant of religion rather than religion itself; it scarcely has the requisite quality of an awareness of the larger scheme of things or of super-human forces found in most religions.

With regard to the more general theory of animism it has also been held that the idea of spirit or soul arose from primitive experiences like dreams, trances, diseased seizures, hallucinations, and seeing one's reflection in a quiet pool. Thus the idea of an "other" self arose—a self that took journeys at night or led a separate spiritual existence. Though interesting, these theories seem largely conjectural. The primitive may be preliterate, but he is not altogether stupid. Even young infants soon distinguish between dreams and reality; and animals, after an experience or two, are no longer concerned with reflections in mirrors, nor seem to worry about their spiritual selves as a result. And it is more plausible, when we find the concept of spirits used by the primitive to explain the aliveness of the world of nature, the death state, or dream experiences, to say that the idea of spirit has arisen elsewhere and otherwise than through them. As present to the mind on other grounds, it is a principle of the explanation of such experiences, not vice versa.

In any case we should always bear in mind that such explanations are imaginative creations, not observed facts. And unfortunately for any theory that would insist that in the primitive conception of living spirits we have the original form of religion, we must note: (1) the idea of spirits does not necessarily become religious in the sense of creating any rituals or other apparatus of faith, but often exists side by side—rather incidentally—with genuine religious ideas; (2) that the idea of living personal spirits seems to belong to a secondary and later period of development among primitive peoples, and not to the first.

#### e. *Pre-animistic Origins*

That the primitive thinks of his world as intensely alive in every part there can be little doubt. The conception of the world as a mass of relatively inert "matter" organized on mechanical lines, which has characterized our thought in the West until rather recently, is not the primitive point of view. The latter is rather one that sees the world as consciously and immediately responsive to human attitudes and actions, governed by nonmaterial forces or beings.

But this aliveness may be thought of in other ways than as possession by living spirits; such seems to be, and has been, the case in many instances among primitives. A kind of pre-animistic or subspiritual aliveness is in fact precisely what is meant by the primitive term *mana*, or its equivalent. This term was

first made current by Codrington's observation of its use among the Melanesian natives. It was used by them to express their sense of nature's aliveness in a rather vague and general way, not quite fully personal, nor yet entirely impersonal.

The negative aspect of mana is *taboo*. Taboo, or tabu, comes from the West Pacific Island *tapu* (Hawaiian *kāpu*) meaning "marked." What is taboo is marked off for special use, sometimes by human, sometimes by superhuman, forces. A woman in primitive society is taboo to men until she has been given to a husband, and then is taboo to all others but him. Within the immediate clan, women are taboo to all the men; wives must be found elsewhere. The weapons, clothing, and dwelling of a chief are taboo to others. And this sense may be, and often is, extended to the sacred article or place, which is taboo for common use, for the uninitiated, or for the unprepared, because it belongs to spirits or divine powers.

How widely the mana-taboo concept may be applied has been debated. Some would apply it quite generally to the primitive way of conceiving reality, and find its equivalent in such terms as *orenda*, *wakanda*, and *manito* among American Indians. So viewed it would be an impersonal permeative power to be found in some degree in almost everything, manifesting itself in natural phenomena, in unusual psychic powers like those of the shaman, in the personal force or the power of leadership, or in the excellence of certain weapons or tools. Others would suggest that it is not as generalized as this, such a general idea being somewhat beyond the primitive mind, but that it applies rather specifically to the individual who possesses it. Each person or object has its own individualized mana, so to speak—its own peculiar brand of power. They would question whether all the different primitive ways of conceiving the world's aliveness can be given one name.

And we must note one thing further, when we are considering the mana-taboo concept as the primitive form of all religion: *per se* it is not religious. As we have seen, it may be applied in some very natural and nonreligious contexts. It becomes religious only when it is given a specifically religious application; and the line between these usages is often very hard to draw.

Perhaps we can say, somewhat following Marett, that though not specifically religious nor representing one omnipresent concept, this general way of thinking seems to characterize most of the primitives we know, and to offer a pre-animistic stage of very probable universality, from which religion later developed. Thus mana-taboo represents a generalized primitive attitude toward reality rather than a given specific concept of it. It appears in many specific local forms, which may vary considerably among themselves. Its very vagueness well adapted it to that cultural stage between the first very primitive condition



of man (which we must assume but cannot observe) in which the conceptions of personal individuality or spirits were still lacking, and the somewhat less primitive culture in which these have developed, as represented by the observable primitives today. It was able to merge with the older conceptions of impersonal force on the one hand, and yet on the other live harmoniously with the more personalized forms of thinking about reality which were developing for the future. It would represent a general awareness of the more-than-human or other-than-human aliveness of the world, but be capable of many varied forms and combinations. Marett's statement puts it as follows:

Mana in its local meaning proves to be capable of existing in combination with a doctrine of spirits, souls, and ghosts. . . . Mana, which occasionally comes near meaning soul, since it may express indwelling psychic power, though hardly personality, is always co-extensive with the supernatural. For the rest, the line drawn between the personal and the impersonal in rudimentary religious thought is fluctuating and vague.<sup>7</sup>

#### f. *Conclusions*

We have now surveyed some of the more important theories of religious origins, and should ask ourselves what we have gained for our understanding of religions and their similarity. And we must repeat what we said at the beginning of this discussion of religious origins: the attempt to find the absolutely first form of religious life is an unsuccessful one; and even the results of further attempts to get at very early stages of primitive religion, such as we have been dealing with, are to be viewed as perhaps plausible but not proved. What we there stated must also be further emphasized: whatever our findings, religion is to be judged by what it has become rather than by what it first was.

We may state our general and tentative conclusions in the following terms:

(1) It seems doubtful that any *one* universal theory can be applied to all religious origins. We can say that some habits of mind seem almost universal among primitives, such as those typified by animism and the mana-taboo attitude. And we can note that primitives, reacting to the same general world environment and possessing roughly the same psychic and physical equipment, often develop somewhat similar patterns of thought and action in the religious area. But beyond this we ought not to go.

(2) The line between religion and nonreligion on the primitive level is extremely variable. We cannot always separate religion and magic; they may live side by side, using each other's techniques till a relatively late stage. Spell and incantation shade insensibly into prayer. Reverence for the channel of spiritual

<sup>7</sup> R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion*, p. 100.

power, like an object or a rite, can hardly be separated from reverence for power itself. Mana may be conceived as personal or impersonal, and appear as a working concept alongside or within the structure of either religion or magic.

Religion as well as magic at the primitive level is very practical. Primitive religion is man standing in the need of many things besides prayer, and seeking by all means at his disposal to secure them. Direct physical action and indirect religious and magical techniques are all tried, though the latter do not seem as indirect to the primitive as to us. Thus the religious or prereligious quality, still very vague and imperfectly defined, mingles with many other primitive interests. Only later in religious and cultural development is it clearly and distinctly defined.

(3) Religion at the primitive level is eminently societal in its first forms. Durkheim overemphasizes and misinterprets this quality in religion, but its importance is truly great. At the primitive level religion is a function of the group, and the individual is largely lost to view. Later the individual makes his significant religious appearance; but throughout its course religion is a group phenomenon, with even its geniuses fitting somewhere into its group life and tradition.

(4) In conclusion we may note a rather general feature of the whole pattern of primitive religion which is prophetic of what it is finally to become, for religion even at the primitive level appears to make its own peculiar type of distinction. It marks off certain areas by its taboos, and considers them to be filled with the power of mana or possessed by living spirits. It is aware of an "otherness," a nonnatural, a different-from-ordinary or more-than-ordinary realm of being that requires to be treated in a special way. And though the primitive is clearly practical in his treatment of this realm, hoping from it largely material benefits and immediate goods, he is not *merely* practical. He is vaguely aware of the mysterious far shores on which his immediate concerns finally touch, of the dependence of the known on the unknown or partially known, and that his life on earth has a further boundary of which he is only dimly conscious. To a consideration of the meaning of this "other" world, which even the primitive apprehends, we shall turn in the next chapter.



## Chapter IV

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### THE DISTINGUISHING MARKS OF RELIGION

We have surveyed the field of primitive religions in the hope of finding there some clue to the essential nature of that unity which enables us to speak of a specific area of human life as "religious" in distinction from all other areas. We considered whether it might be possible to find such a clue in some one primitive pattern or first form of all religion. But it appears that absolutely first beginnings in religion are beyond the scope of our possible knowledge; and religions vary so considerably in the way in which they proceed from the primitive to the more developed forms, that we could not say of any one way: this is it. Nor did any theory that would explain religion as the simple fulfillment of a single primitive desire, or root it in one psychological attitude, seem justifiable. The most we can say is that there are some relatively primitive forms of religious idea and practice that appear to have been rather general, and from which most early religions may have come.

If we grant that we cannot fully unify religions by theories of identical or similar beginnings, are there other ways of understanding their unity? To another such way we turn in this chapter to inquire whether there are distinguishing external marks by which religion may be separated from the other areas of life. Do all religions have peculiar features, peculiar to them as religion, that set them apart from other patterns of thought and action? The answer is probably yes; but we need to pick carefully our manner of approach. We might simply describe varied patterns of conduct or institutions that have been called religious, but this would lead to multiple confusion. We should have a collection of religious customs, but not the essence of religion. A better way to attack the problem is to ask whether there is a basic thread on which the variant practices can be strung, an inner significance by which they can be understood and organized for our thought.

#### I. *The Sacred*

There can be no dispute about the fact that religions at every level make at least one rather clear-cut and basic distinction in dealing with the world of

human experience. Indeed, it appears to be characteristic of religion *as such* that it draws a line through man's experience of his environment, dividing it into two quite definite segments. Every religion says in its own way—and more often by attitude and by obscure symbol rather than in so many words: "There is a special quality found in a limited part of the world that is not found in the rest of it. This special part must be given special treatment." This does not mean that the remainder of the world is evil; it simply does not have this peculiar quality. By comparison with the special part, the remainder of the world, according to religion, is a lesser and commonplace affair.

The name we shall give this special part of the world which must be specially handled, is *the sacred or the holy*; or we might say that the quality that distinguishes this special part of the world from the remainder in the eyes of religion is *sacredness or holiness*. This is *our* term rather than that of the religions themselves, let it be noted. For though some of the more highly developed ones do frequently use the word in the above sense, less developed ones do not even know it. But in attitude all religions do distinguish an area of sacredness, whatever they call it, and set it apart from the rest of reality by taboo, rituals, and varied species of special regard.

Now this quality of sacredness that religion uniformly marks off by special devices is conceived as dynamic in nature; and this dynamism has a double aspect of being both positive and negative, helpful and harmful, depending on how it is handled. Especially at the primitive stage, religion's lore and ritual are techniques of handling in safe and beneficial ways this special kind of different-from-ordinary potency. Thus it is that the taboo rules are framed to keep the power of mana from harming the uninitiated or to keep spirits from being aroused to hostility. There are also the more positive rules by which this potency may be turned to the benefit of those who keep them. On the whole, however, the negative rules designed to avoid harm are probably in the predominance in primitive religion.

We may observe this basic religious distinction of sacredness and its very interesting development among the Hebrews. When we first encounter the Hebrews in the pages of the Old Testament their culture and religion are beyond the primitive stage in many respects, but by no means in all. The place of the ark in their religious practice is a case in point. The ark of the covenant was an oblong wooden box a few feet in length and covered with gold. It contained sacred relics, traditionally supposed to be the tablets of the law given to Moses on Sinai, Aaron's magic rod, and a pot of manna. It was carried by porters from camp site to camp site in the people's wanderings, and finally brought to rest in the temple in Jerusalem long after the conquest. It was treated with the greatest respect: only those rightly prepared by ceremonial purification



were allowed to approach it; and it was provided within the camp with a special tent and attendants. When one man (Uzzah) rashly put his hand upon the ark to steady it as it was being transported to Jerusalem, he was said to have died on the spot. Once it was captured by the Philistines, but the statues of their gods fell down before it in their temple, and the Philistines were afflicted with tumors as long as the ark was in their possession. But its presence might also bring blessing, as was demonstrated by the prosperity of the man at whose house the ark was left when Uzzah's death brought its journey to a temporary halt. Later, and because of this beneficial effect, it was taken by King David to Jerusalem with great rejoicing.

This same quality of sacredness applied to God as far as the Hebrews were concerned. Indeed, the sacredness of the ark and that of God were one and the same thing; the ark was sacred because it was the symbol of God's actual presence among His people. God and the ark of His presence were *holy*, which meant in the beginning, "dangerous if not properly handled," or "full of rather unpredictable power." And thus it was that the ark in its tent in the desert, later in its house of cedar at Shiloh, and still later in the temple at Jerusalem, was ringed round with the fitting safeguards of its sacredness or holiness.

With the development of the Hebrew religion the content of the holiness which is attributed to God somewhat changed. The prophets gave it an ethical quality. They insisted that when it is said that God is holy, the meaning is that He is just, righteous, and merciful to a supreme degree—not simply that He is dangerous. Indeed, He is not unpredictably angry nor too much concerned about outward rituals and taboos; He is angry only when His just ethical will is disobeyed, and would rather have moral righteousness than religious rite. A considerable hostility may have developed at this point between the priests, who thought of God's holiness in the more primitive way as connected with the ark and the sacrificial altar, and the prophets, who gave it a moral interpretation while largely discounting the ritualistic side. The prophets were critical of the priests, and the priests were often hostile to the prophets. But in the long run they sought to compose their differences in that combination of ritual and righteousness that finally became the Jewish way of life.

Whatever its formulation, however, sacredness is the basic religious distinction. In fact, religion might be defined in a superficial manner as that way of life which sets apart the sacred from the profane, the secular, and the common, and constitutes itself the guardian of that sacredness. In this its self-chosen role of guardian and caretaker of the sacred, religion proclaims diverse and strange things to be holy. A rank outsider is often unable to know just what is sacred and what is not, or why; not until he becomes thoroughly familiar with the

history and detailed beliefs of the given religion can he judge accurately in such matters.

We may say in general that sacred places are important in all religions. Among the primitives, hills, springs, groves of trees, mountain peaks, and rock formations are frequently set apart as holy; they are taboo for most people on most occasions. Special precautions are taken to keep them from deliberate or ignorant violation by strangers or the uninitiated, ranging all the way from curses and incantations up to and including the use of physical force; primarily these measures are taken to protect their sacredness, and secondarily, to safeguard the unwitting profaner.

Also religions at all levels of development frequently build shrines and houses of worship at their sacred spots. These places of worship, which we shall discuss later in another connection, sometimes gain a sacredness in their own right; for not every temple, church, synagogue, or mosque is built at a place that was formerly sacred. Its very construction hallows the spot, however unholy before. Nevertheless a multitude of them have been built on locations previously sacred to the faith—the place of the founder's birth, the scene of one of his great deeds, the site of some striking event in the history of the religion, or a locality bearing some association with a hero or saint. Jerusalem, called the Holy City by Christian, Jew, and Moslem, is an excellent illustration. Mohammed revered it as having been associated with the Hebrew patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac; he first directed his followers to pray toward it, but later, when he quarreled with the Jews, turned them toward Mecca. His followers later built in it a great mosque. Though Moses, the founder of the Hebrew nation and faith, was never associated with Jerusalem, David chose it as his capital city, and Solomon built his temple there, which for Jews hallows it forever. Christians call it sacred because of its association with Jesus' life and death and have built many shrines and churches nearby.

Certain specified objects, frequently found in places of worship, are also esteemed as sacred. A great variety could be enumerated, but here we shall mention only a few. The primitive, for instance, has his fetish, a portable godling or perhaps a peculiarly shaped stone or bit of wood that he reveres as full of sacred power. Other better educated "heathen" may bow down to their sacred images in ornate temples and offer them sanctified articles of food or clothing in worship. Thus the sacred offering and the sacred image mutually increase each other's sacredness. The Christian of some varieties of that faith has his holy candles, holy water, rosaries, sacred relics, and crucifixes, all made holy by priestly blessing. Even in those varieties of the Christian faith where such practices are abhorred, the service of the Eucharist (Lord's Supper) and the elements used in it are usually held in greatest reverence. And so we might



go on, but may say in summary that there seems to be scarcely any faith whatsoever without its quota of sacred symbols, great or small.

*Writings* also bulk large among the sacred elements of religion, though they are, of course, limited to literate peoples. Every major religion in the world today, and many a minor one as well, has its sacred scriptures. Buddhists possess voluminous quantities of the sayings of Buddha, and legends about him and his disciples; Hindus reverence the Vedas, Sikhs the Granth, Jews their Law and Prophets, Moslems the Koran, and Christians the Bible. Even Confucians have their classics, but scarcely regard them as sacred in the full religious sense.

Now the line which separates a scripture from other edifying writings is not always perfectly clear. The Mormons, for example, have the *Book of Mormon*, which is presumably harmonious with the Bible, and the Christian Scientist's book, *Science and Health*, is subtitled "With a Key to the Scriptures." For both sects, however, their own document is a scripture for all practical purposes, ranking with the Bible in its authority over them, and undoubtedly much more used by them than the Bible. Nor do the more orthodox Christians quite agree about the Bible itself. Catholics regard the fourteen books of the Apocrypha as inspired, though Protestants do not; but it is doubtful whether Catholics make great use of them. In general it may be said that the line is *usually* quite clearly drawn between the scripture and the documents of lesser inspiration, no matter how popular or edifying the latter may be. Often the scripture is simply the oldest document produced by the faith, and hence has achieved supreme authority by long usage; or else it may contain the later revelations of the founder of a new faith and is then held to supersede the older scriptures. Thus does the Christian view his New Testament, which he holds to be superior to the Old, though it is much less ancient.

There are also sacred *persons* in nearly all religions. Some of these are sacred because of their sacred office, which office in turn gets its sacredness from its having to do with the sacred place or object. Others are esteemed to be sacred because of the unusual powers they are believed to possess. Such are the shamans, witch doctors, magicians, ministers, and priests found in various cultures. The more elaborate the ritual observances of any faith, the greater is their number and the more important their role. And nearly every faith with an extended history has its roster of holy men and saints besides its sacred officials, who are revered, not so much because of any office which they ever held, as for their quality of life, the deeds they are reputed to have done, or their intimate relation to divine reality. These are variously accorded honor as law-givers, prophets, saviours, or incarnations of God—witness Moses, Mohammed, Jesus, Buddha, and Ramakrishna; and they more frequently belong to the past than to the present.



## 2. *The Supernatural*

Why is it that such places, objects, writings, or persons are called holy or sacred beyond and above others? After we have sorted out all minor reasons, like those of long traditional association with the faith, sentimental attachments, and close relation to the founder, the really fundamental reason is that sacred things have a particularly close relation to the *supernatural*. They are sacred—these founders of religions, these temples, writings, and objects—because they have within them an extra endowment of the power of the Absolute, God, the Determiner of Destiny, the more-than-human spirits, or however supreme reality is conceived. There is more of such power in them than in ordinary beings of the same general sort; they are the special channels bringing that power into contact with men. To be sacred is to be the manifest locus of such power. Such is the meaning of religion in its distinction between the sacred and the common. The word “supernatural” is used here in its very broadest sense, to indicate the more-than-natural, or more-than-human, power or goodness with which man seeks to make contact through religion. Religions have conceived this power in widely different ways, depending on the cultural context in which they are found and upon the experiences in which a particular religion is rooted. But in all of them the attempt is made to relate the individual or the group to this ultimate power or powers with which men in the final analysis have to deal.

For the primitive peoples this power is manifest in the forces of nature which surround them, and with which ordinary methods cannot fully cope, yet on which they are utterly dependent for existence. They would scarcely use the term supernatural, since to them all nature is supernature—or at least is permeated with and constantly affected by nonmaterial, invisible potencies. Nor have they a consistent pattern of thinking about this power. Sometimes it is conceived of as largely impersonal. Mana, as we have noted, is a rather impersonal concept, more of a force or dynamism than a personal spirit; yet it easily shades over into the concept of personal spiritual being. In fact, the concept of mana is often found side by side with the animistic idea of a multitude of spirits and is viewed sometimes as representing the usual form of spirit power. A majority of primitives probably tend to believe in the animistic version of reality rather more than the impersonalistic—especially the primitives we know today; yet considerable impersonal vagueness clings to their conception of such spirits, which are never fully individual, but more in the order of somewhat anonymous wraiths.

The patterns of conceiving the nature of supreme reality become more clearly defined among the more developed religions, but are not entirely clear even there. The Greeks, Romans, Babylonians, and Egyptians personalized the forces



of nature or the natural objects themselves—sun, moon, stars, sky, sea, winds—and called them gods. So also did early India. Whether the result was more of a personalized nature-force or of a naturalized personality it is hard to say. The Greek and Indian gods were intensely human, with all the emotions, desires, and thoughts of human beings, and were accorded considerable individuality; yet as nature-forces they were somewhat ruthless and mechanical in their operation. Sometimes they manifested themselves directly to man in visions and dreams, but at other times man must make his own interpretation of their actions as seen in natural events. Egypt and Rome were more inclined to think of them as impersonal potencies, and were less interested in the personal foibles of the gods.

Later religious thought on the matter roughly divides itself into two basic patterns East-West-wise, though with many variant shadings. On the whole the Oriental faiths (Buddhism, later Hinduism, Shintoism, and Confucianism in so far as it is a faith) think of the supreme reality as impersonal. The underlying essence of nature, the featureless unity of an Absolute, the impersonality of a cosmic moral order, can be thought of better as "it" than "he" or "she." This is somewhat the classic philosophic pattern, of course; for subsequently on the popular level this impersonalism was overlaid with a belief in personal gods and spirits, not easily distinguishable from the gods of other religions. In general, however, even the most distinctively personal god in India easily fades out into another god or into some kind of an eternal essence.

The Western religions, or more accurately the Mideastern religions that the West adopted (Zoroastrianism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity), on the other hand, produced the only clear and fully personal monotheisms. For them God is fully personal, and He is the ultimate reality. Though Christianity speaks of a Trinity, and though other spiritual beings such as angels have been brought into the picture at times by all of them, for each of them God is a knowing, directing intelligence Whose will is the supreme driving force of the cosmos and with Whom all men must come to terms.

### 3. *Revelation*

In connection with the distinction between the Eastern and Western religious conceptions of divine reality as impersonal and personal, respectively, we shall go on to consider a characteristic feature of religion which has been given its most distinctive name in the West, but which is generally present in all faiths. It is that quality of religious practice and life called revelation.

Very narrowly and specifically this term is used to signify a particular mode of relationship between the supernatural and man: the self-communication of the supernatural to chosen individuals or groups. The distinctive mark of reve-

lation in this narrow sense is the activity of supernatural forces or beings who voluntarily seek to communicate with men rather than waiting passively for men to make contact with them. Or perhaps we might put it in many cases in the past tense by saying that a revelation is a given body of doctrine, or record of religious experience, that members of a religious group believe has come to them from divine (supernatural) sources. Religions that hold to a very specific type of revelation often speak of themselves as "revealed" religions, meaning that they possess a definite body of truth revealed to them by God or gods, supposedly not granted to other religions, which they often classify as "nonrevealed" or "natural" religions. If one asks what is the content of these revelations, it can be answered that they usually consist of statements about the divine nature, methods by which mankind may make beneficial contact with this supernatural reality, and perhaps a code of human conduct pleasing to the divine powers.

Two items are to be noted about these "revealed" religions. One is that in nearly every case they are also those religions that entertain a *personal* conception of divine reality; which means that they are predominantly those of the West: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. (Zoroastrianism belongs in general to this group also, though in its modern form, Parseeism, it is to be found in India as a transplanted faith.) And this is quite understandable; for the thought pattern that considers revelation to be a deliberate and definite act of self-communication on the part of divine power, fits most easily into the nature of a purposeful act possible only to a personal will. Indeed it is perhaps inevitable to think that a Reality that is personal will sooner or later seek to communicate directly with other personal beings, such as men. And this same consideration applies even when revelation is thought of as a historical event rather than certain documents or spoken words; it is still in the nature of a personally willed action.

The other notable feature of the religions of revelation is the *exceeding definiteness* of their channels of communication with the supernatural, or of the products of that communication. We have already observed that many religions—including some not usually classed as religions of revelation, such as Hinduism, for example—have their sacred writings in which divine truth is to be supremely found. And we further noted that these primary writings are usually somewhat distinct from the secondary ones. Yet we can say that "revealed" religions are specially and narrowly insistent on the sacred character of a very few of their writings or channels of communication. One might say that they pin-point these areas of supremely inspired truth, as compared to a more diffused sense of inspiration to be found in the nonrevealed faiths. It may be only a difference in amount rather than kind, yet one must observe that the Moslem values his Koran, the Jew his Scriptures—in particular the Torah or Law por-



tion—and the Protestant Christian his Bible, much more intensely than the Hindu his Vedas. The former seek to live very directly by the truths found in these books, and would often give to them, and to them alone, the attribute of infallibility; whereas the Hindu, though he gives ardent lip-service to the sacred Vedas, does not so narrowly or directly depend on them for his religious inspiration. Practically speaking, he uses many later writings, such as the *Bhagavad-gita*, for inspiration, and rather tolerantly expects to find holy men today who are divinely inspired. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, on the other hand, tend to say that the day of supreme inspiration is in the past, and that Torah, Bible, and Koran are revelations once and forever sufficient.

There are modifications of this conception of the narrow and specific revelation given once and for all, however, even within these faiths—particularly within Christianity. The latter's New Testament is viewed as a new revelation, through Christ, which transcended and supplemented but did not utterly displace that given to the Jews by Moses. And there have been sprinkled along through Christian history a sizable number of sects that have maintained that revelation was a progressive and continuing affair, which did not end with the Hebrew prophets or with Christ and his apostles. One can think of medieval Anabaptist preachers and prophets, the modern Quaker with his inner light, the Christian Scientist with Mrs. Eddy's *Science and Health*, and the Latter Day Saints of Jesus Christ with their *Book of Mormon* given through Joseph Smith. Or there is the Roman Catholic Church, which reveres the Bible as containing divinely revealed truth and the great church creeds of the first four Christian centuries (the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Chalcedonian) as being near-inspired, but which claims for herself the exclusive authority to interpret scriptures and creeds, and, since the Council of Trent (1562-3), holds that her traditions are of equal authority with the Scriptures. (Thus the Catholic believes in a divinely revealing church rather than a divinely revealed body of truth.)

On the whole, however, these are exceptions rather than the rule; and even they are not total exceptions. The sects that emphasize the continuing revelation come in time to depend more and more heavily on their original and once-new revelations—the Saints on the *Book of Mormon*, and the Scientists on Mrs. Eddy's writings. (Even the Catholic Church with its official organ of inspired infallibility (the pope) keeps its pronouncements of "new" truth few and far between, and sets even those in the context of a basically unchanging revelation.) The general tendency here is to a static concept of revelation, which is extended over into the means of worship and pattern of the religious life, so that these latter are urged on men as being also divinely revealed. Hence the expression "revealed religion," which means that the total way of life, including beliefs, rituals, and practices, is considered to be of divine origin.



For our purposes here, however, we must interpret revelation in a somewhat wider context than this. For while the term itself has the specific meaning and forms just indicated, it is also indicative of a much more general characteristic to be found in many differing religions than a narrow and technical use of the term itself would suggest. We may say that revelation is only a particular name used by some religions for the universally religious sense that men have communicated and do communicate with the supernatural, whether that communication be conceived as a specific body of material given in the past by the divine powers themselves or a body of inspired writings and practices which have resulted from human effort. Indeed, those religions which are sometimes classified as "nonrevealed" would reject the implications of that classification as derogatory to them, and insist that they also as well as the "revealed" religions, have divine truths, however arrived at.

Perhaps we might say that just this sense of the possibility of communication with the supernatural, however conceived, is of the essence of a religion. Not only does religion contend that there is a more-than-human (supernatural) dimension to reality, and mark it off as sacred, but that it is able to make contact with that supernatural reality in definite ways. In this broad sense all religion is revelation, that is, a body of custom, ritual patterns, symbolisms, usages, and doctrines with a divine content, through which men may make contact with the divine nature. And each religion recommends its way as being the best mode of making such contact, and as having the largest quantity or best quality of "revealed" truth about such matters.

#### 4. *Dealing with the Sacred and Supernatural*

We have now come this far: the presumed presence of the supernatural in some persons, places, objects, customs, or writings more than in others, or perhaps supremely in some few, leads mankind to call them sacred. This sense of sacredness may result either from man's discoveries, or from self-revelation by the supernatural, or from a combination of both. And because sacred, any object becomes somewhat dangerous—to be treated with particular care because of its closer and fuller relationship to the supernatural, whether that be thought of as mana, spirits, gods, World Soul, or God. We may, in fact, go one step further, and say that religions as such believe that in their revelations, whether specific or general, they are in genuine contact with the supernatural, participants in genuine intercommunication.

Given this understanding of what religions mean by their distinction between sacred and common, we now have a solid foundation for the proper understanding of religious practices and ceremonial no matter how varied. *Religious practices* (rituals, traditional usages, conduct patterns) *are the rules or tech-*



*niques by which men seek to make effective and beneficial contact with the supernatural.* It is immaterial, functionally speaking, as to how such rules came to be formulated. Revealed religion is considered to have been directly prescribed by God, or quite self-evidently agreeable to the will of God; other faiths either do not inquire as to the precise origin of their ancient tradition, considering it doubtless to be the product of a holier and better past, or else emphasize the role of discoverer played by some holy man of the past. And the former type of faith may tend to define the rules more exactly by forming narrowly orthodox patterns of dealing with the supernatural in contrast to the greater practical tolerance of the latter. But once arrived, all these patterns fulfill the same essential function: they serve as the most effective ways possible, known to their respective cultures, for channeling and consummating intercourse with divine reality. When they become systematized we then have organized patterns of religious ritual, institutions, and way of life. We may distinguish two main types of such organized modes of human-divine intercommunication: *worship* and *religious fellowships*.

#### a. *Worship*

Worship is an interesting word. It comes from the old Anglo-Saxon word "worth-ship," referring to the sort of reverence or respect shown a ranking nobleman or king when one entered his presence. It implied both the feeling of respect presumably felt by the social inferior, and the motions he went through to show that respect outwardly, such as bowing, removing the hat, and using elegantly respectful speech. "Worth-ship," or its shortened form in religion, "worship," therefore means the honor and respect that one who conceives himself to be in the presence of the supernatural shows to that presence, whether it be ancestor's spirit, the dryad dwelling in a Greek pool, or Jehovah on Mt. Sinai.

Probably worship in a technical sense is too high a term to apply to the magical rites of the primitive when he says a charm over his fish spear or prostrates himself before the witch doctor. Yet something of the reverent fear that later becomes religious awe is also to be found here. For though religion is neither a clearly defined quantity nor quality at this point, the raw materials of it are present, and ritual is in the making.

Here, as well as later and higher in the scale when worship clearly appears, the end in view is to relate oneself as closely and beneficially as possible to those powers that determine human destiny.

As religions and cultures develop, so do clearly defined patterns of worship; that is to say, the techniques of approaching the supernatural are more carefully and elaborately worked out and formalized. The result is what we call *ritual*,

or the style and pattern a particular religion gives to its attempt to reach the supernatural. This form will be the result of a multitude of religious and cultural factors, and to understand it one would need to know the history of both religion and culture. But all religions from the highest to the lowest are at one in what they intend to accomplish by their worship.

Almost needless to say, most of the sacred persons and objects of a religion are involved in its worship. Increasingly elaborate styles of worship need experts to conduct them properly, lest a fatal error be made that would destroy their efficacy or mar their beauty. And conversely, those who work with sacred rituals tend, from a variety of motives, to elaborate and embellish them. Thus are created symbolisms of all sorts, which increase the beauty of the ritual or set forth vividly its meaning. Pictures, statues, bells, candles, incense, elaborate gestures, splendid robes, music, and solemn processions come into being. The ancient worship patterns of mankind are often very intricate structures of imposing majesty and splendid beauty.

The sacred writings also play their part in worship. They are often read to refresh the memories of the faithful, to teach the young the articles of belief, or to inspire them by the example of the life of the Founder of the Faith. Reading the scripture keeps the worshipers aware of the ways or will of the supernatural being or force which they honor in their worship. Nor must we forget the role of the sacred place. Not for long do most religions remain without their places of worship. Such buildings are constructed specifically to provide the best facilities for the form of worship prescribed by each faith for its people, to emphasize the preaching, hearing the Scriptures, or the priestly performance of the rites. Places of worship are therefore of little value for any other purpose.

Perhaps the high point of the life of worship is to be found in the *sacrament*, which might be roughly defined as the most sacred and solemn of all the rites possessed by a religion. In one sense all religious deeds or ceremonies are sacramental; but there also is usually a holy of holies marked off within the holy area of a religion, where we encounter only the very most secret, essential, or meaningful rites. And why are some thus more essential than others? Perhaps because they represent more distinctively than anything else in the structure of the faith its meaning; or else it is that they carry one back most directly and vividly to the words and deeds of the Founder. Or even more basically it is that they contain the most direct or assured touch with the supernatural to be found anywhere in the total pattern of institution, ritual, and way of life. Here in the sacrament is the point at which the divine fire is most likely to kindle, the superhuman power to be felt. So it is with the Catholic at the moment when the priest's blessing is changing the sacred Host (the communion wafer) into



the Body of Christ; so it is with the Quaker when the holy silence is broken by words growing out of a true illumination by the Inner Light.

It should be noted in passing that the word sacrament itself is one peculiar to Christianity, and has been most elaborately developed by the Catholic Churches (Roman and Greek) in their seven ordered sacramental rites. Yet we may truly say that the sacramental quality is to be found in *any* religion in that area where we reach the highest and most solemn moment of its worship.

One further element of worship must not be forgotten. It is *prayer*, which in many respects is the most important of all the distinguishing marks of religion. Prayer indeed has less to do with the externals of worship than some of the features we have just been discussing; but often it does take on external form, and in any case is related intimately to nearly every other practice of piety. Many students of religious practices would be willing to say flatly: religion is prayer; or as a religion *prays*, so is it. It is indeed central to any faith, whose inward quality can be quite accurately gauged by the level of its prayers—what it prays for, the importance it accords prayer, and the like. And one could also say truly that wherever religion of any sort has appeared it has produced prayers of some kind. No doubt the reverse is true, that where there is no prayer there is no religion.

We must be elastic in our definition of prayer, to be sure, and think in terms of function rather than outward form. Ideally prayer is communion with a more-than-human being on the part of the worshiper; and there is a real distinction between those religions that emphasize this concept of prayer and those that consider *meditation* rather than prayer to be the heart of worship. Yet the Oriental trance-meditation is the Oriental equivalent of prayer, for like prayer it is an attempt of the religious man to make the most direct contact with Supreme Reality. If it is to be called prayer, there is usually a direction of words and thoughts toward spirits or gods; if it is to be termed meditation, there is an effort to "lose" oneself in the direct experience of the ultimate nature of things. Here is similar purpose but different method.

Hence, viewed as an attempt to achieve direct contact with the inmost reality of its Object of worship, "prayer" is the constant accompaniment of all worship. Particularly is this true in those religions where a specific prayer form is used. All the sacred ritual acts, and especially the sacramental ones, are accompanied by prayer. Prayer is not another means for making contact with Deity that competes with the sacrament, but an aid to the sacrament—even a highly necessary part of it. The more sacred the rite, the more important the place of prayer. And prayer is also capable of infinite adaptation. It may be almost indistinguishable from the magic spell at the primitive level; but it may also attain a spiritual inwardness which goes far beyond the outward public form, and

thus becomes part and parcel of the devoutly private practice of religion that characterizes the "higher" religions. Perhaps better than any other of the distinguishing practices of religion it may be thus carried over from the group into individual life.

These patterns of ritual that religious worship creates in its desire to make effective contact with the more-than-human are not mere luxury items; they are indispensable to organized religion. They are the social and spiritual cement of the group, the center about which the group life is built; in this capacity the ritual is often basically formative of the religious society—a feature later to be noted in detail. And frequently it is the ritual pattern that most clearly distinguishes one group from another, rather than their differing articles of faith. An example of this would be the contrast between the high-church Episcopalian Mass and the Baptist revival meeting. Here are two Christian church groups, both subscribing to the same general doctrines, but a world apart in their patterns of worship.

Now and again when ritual structures have become too elaborate for the taste of those who wish a more direct and simple access to the object of worship, large groups have broken away from the highly formalized worship patterns of the traditional faith. Thus Buddhism was in part a protest against the elaborate sacrificial apparatus of Brahmanism. And at the time of the European Middle Ages the masses of India turned increasingly from Hindu formalism to the emotional faith cults. So it was also that the Protestant reformers and their successors have sought "freedom" from the Catholic liturgy in simpler services of worship, till one reaches the ultimate minimum of ritual with the Quaker and his silent meeting. Yet even here ritual is not entirely lacking; the silence itself has a kind of ritual quality about it, and a general traditional pattern for its fruitful use in the meeting is usually observed. Quaker worship represents the minimum degree of ritual but not its elimination.

#### b. *Religious Fellowships*

The group or fellowship of believers is also characteristic of religion. Later in our discussion we shall consider the relation of religious groups to other groups and the distinctive nature of the religious fellowship (Part II), but here we can observe in passing that religious living characteristically leads to the formation of a group. Religion may cast its mantle over groups already formed or over those resting on a foundation other than religious belief or ritual; yet a group life of some sort is necessary to religion, whether created by it or borrowed.

There are, to be sure, many exponents of the solitary religious life—the lonely souls every religion has produced. The prophet and the saint, though they may



not try to separate themselves, are solitary religious geniuses who do not fellowship successfully with others of the faith. The Hebrew prophets of the 8th century B.C. were lonely traveling preachers, for the most part, who had no following and belonged to no religious organization. The medieval Christian saint and Hindu holy men were often recluses and hermits.

✓ Yet these are the exceptions who prove the rule; prophets and saints come forth from an organized religion and tradition, if only to reprove it; and solitary though they may be at first, a group inevitably gathers round them either in life or after death. Buddha preached a solitary way of salvation, but a brotherhood of monks and sisterhood of nuns formed in his lifetime and with his blessing, though the blessing upon the nuns was somewhat reluctant. The Hebrew prophets did much to maintain the unity of their people, and today are the guiding light of Judaism. Wherever there is religion it takes unto itself a body of ritual and organization—a chosen people, a church, a tribe, a holy brotherhood—and the individual genius springs from it, feeds his insights and life back into it, or remains religiously sterile.

The benefits man expects to receive from his religious groups are perhaps two-fold: social and supernatural. Of the first we may say that man is instinctively group-minded, even in religion, and that it would be passing strange if he did not associate himself with others in religious activities. Primitive men in particular feel themselves literally condemned to death when cut off from the group and its life; hence without ever having rationalized it, they subscribe to the doctrine that there is no salvation (religious life of effective sort) outside the church (social group). The same is largely true on a wider scale among those tribal and national religious groups that have tribal and religious gods. Jehovah was thought to be the god of the Israelites as a whole, and not of individual Hebrews, even though they were also individually responsible to Him for their actions; the Covenant on Sinai was made not simply with those who chose to agree, but with the nation.

The second benefit to be achieved by group life in religion is the contact it offers with the supernatural. This means, in terms of the preceding section, that the practice of *worship* is the heart of the religious fellowship; that this latter is primarily a worshiping community. This fact may be often lost sight of when the purely social activities of the traditional religious group bulk large; or it may seem untrue of the fully socialized primitive pattern of life in which worship as such is not clearly distinguishable. Yet the vitality of the religious group seems to be essentially guaranteed by its sense of making a better contact with the supernatural in its group life than its members can individually, or at the very least by the fact that group worship adds something distinctive or unique to individual efforts at worship. This is very definitely true of those primitive

cultural ceremonies that have as their main point securing for the community beneficial material relationships with the supernatural. And this truth is only partly obscured in more developed cultures by the excessive individualism of some who, like extreme Protestants, may hold that they can make contact with God apart from public religious means—perhaps even more effectively, in fact, on the golf course or in the garden. Their Catholic brethren would not agree, however; long ago they rationalized the truth—which the primitive instinctively senses in his strong attachment to group life—in their doctrine that there is no saving contact with God outside the Church. And whether we agree with this specific formulation or not, religious history teaches us that when group worship disappears, sooner or later its individual practice will also evaporate.

### 5. *A Way of Salvation*

One last thing remains to be said about the practices or external marks of religion. Religions prescribe a way of *salvation*. The whole subject of religion as a way of salvation will be dealt with at length in Part III; now we are but saying that all religions of every sort and in every age have viewed themselves as such ways of deliverance.

Most religions hold that men are in some sort of trouble, or are at least greatly limited in what they can do for themselves. There are many things they desire, but cannot attain because of limited powers, or because of hostile or indifferent environmental forces. They live among the great hazards of disease, misfortune, physical danger, starvation, and finally, inevitably face old age and death. According to Buddhist legends it was the sight of a sick man, an old man, a corpse, and a monk who had forsworn the world for the way of religion, that turned Buddha from the path of worldly success to the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment. These sights made him realize the truly precarious nature of human life that his parents had tried to hide from him by surrounding him with luxury and youthful companions.

Inevitably, different religions have different explanations as to why men need salvation, and of what sort it should be. But they are alike in believing both in the need for it and that there is a way to achieve it. In general those faiths which originated in the Middle East (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) have each insisted that theirs is the only true way, though modern Judaism might be called an exception; and those originating in the Far East, particularly India, have been willing to allow a variety of ways. Yet salvation somewhere, somehow, there must be. Indeed that is what makes a religion; its basic purpose is to convince men that they need salvation and then to offer them a way to achieve it.

In this connection religion has originated a conception peculiar to itself, that



of *sin*. Sin is whatever is destructive of, or prevents, salvation; it is whatever puts man at odds with the supernatural. Religions have frequently explained suffering and physical ills of all sorts, even man's generally frustrated and limited condition that puts him in need of salvation, as a result of sin somewhere along the line. Depending on the nature of the religion in question, a sin may range all the way from saying an incantation incorrectly, bringing a blemished animal for sacrifice, disregarding a taboo, on through disobedience of a church regulation against eating meat on certain days or killing the sacred cow, up to and including moral sins like theft, murder, and adultery, or spiritual sins like pride, blasphemy, and covetousness. On the whole one could say that religious development has brought an increasing emphasis on the sinfulness of the immoral act and the wrong inward attitude, rather than that of the ritual omission or incorrect outward deed. But in any case religion conceives sinfulness to be the quality of any act or attitude which is contrary to the ultimate nature of reality or is opposed to the will of God, and hence prejudicial to one's final salvation.

We might then sum up this chapter in terms of salvation by saying that all the efforts that religions put forth are to enable men to achieve salvation of some sort, in this world or the next, or both. Sacredness marks out the area where salvation is to be sought, for salvation results from sustaining right relations with the supernatural. Each religion, by its respective rituals, fellowship with the faithful, inspired teachings, and prescribed mode of conduct, offers a means of beginning, sustaining, and increasing the rightness of one's relationship to that power which man should serve and worship. And each religion holds out the hope of salvation from sinfulness, and sin's effects, to all those who will follow the path it points out to them. It is in truth in their role of bringing salvation to mankind that religions are most genuinely and fully religious.

## Chapter V

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### RELIGION AS NEED FULFILLMENT

We have just concluded a description of religion as that way of thinking about the world and human experience that distinguishes a part of both as different from the remainder. It claims that this part of life, which it separates from the rest and calls sacred, is peculiar in that it is especially permeated with that more-than-human quality (the supernatural) which religion perceives in the universe. Having thus distinguished this one part of experience from all others, religion then prescribes modes of behavior which it considers essential techniques for maintaining right relations with supernatural forces. These organized techniques are called ways of salvation, and consist of patterns of worship, fellowship, and conduct.

In making this basic distinction and drawing its implications religions are basically alike. We shall now consider whether religions are also alike in any significant sense in their attempts to fulfill basic human needs. To be sure, these needs to which religions minister are not entirely confined to religion or to religious ways of fulfillment. They arise in many areas of life, and are at least partly ministered to from other than religious resources. But religion is as often involved in them as they are involved in religion, and it often changes the form and content of these needs in its attempt to fulfill them. Thus religion may expand and alter a "natural" need, such as one for food, to make its fulfillment a sacramental act of worship; or it may extend the desire for companionship to include superhuman beings, so that though the raw material of need and fulfillment are the same as on the natural level, a specific religious element has been added. In any case we cannot fully understand religion until we have seen it in relation to some of the basic needs that motivate mankind.

Four areas of fundamental interest may be distinguished. This list is not necessarily exhaustive, and the terms used are exceedingly broad; but they may serve to indicate the orientation of religion to these phases of human life. First is the adequate and continuing satisfaction of basic needs on the physical level; second, the achievement of personal significance; third, the achievement of sat-



isfying social experiences of companionship and personal responsiveness; and fourth, esthetic and intellectual expression.

### I. *Physical Fulfillment*

The most basic human needs are of course the physical ones—the animal needs for food, shelter, clothing, and sexual satisfaction. The filling of these needs has always occupied and continues to occupy a considerable portion of the time and effort of the vast majority of men at all levels of culture. But whereas in civilized life there is at least some leisure for other pursuits, or the possibility of making more elaborate and pleasurable patterns for the fulfillment of these basic needs, on the primitive level the maintenance of physical life is usually stern business, allowing for little leisure. This would, of course, be less true in some of the milder climates where food is naturally abundant and the pace of life easy; but such idyllic isles of the blest are much fewer than popular imagination supposes. On the whole the matter of keeping alive fully occupies the primitive.

Here human life is much more closely tied to nature than with us. Primitive man is acutely aware of natural forces, because he lives side by side with nature in the raw from day to day and is directly dependent upon her every mood for his continued existence. He lacks our insulating screen of human devices, which has somewhat tamed nature and shields us from the full or immediate shock of heat and cold, the constant threat of dangerous beast and mysterious plague, from famine-bringing drought or flood. He can spend less time on the adornment of the process of keeping alive than his civilized brother, and is therefore much more poignantly aware of the precariousness of human existence.

Primitive religion, consequently much involved in the business of merely keeping alive, sometimes seems scarcely distinguishable as religion from the techniques of agriculture, manual skills, rudimentary arts and sciences. As a separate institution or specialized interest, religion does not exist at this stage; or where there are distinguishable elements of religion, they are yet confusedly mingled with everything else and frequently inseparable from magic. For at this level religion must work directly and obviously for its living by working in turn for man's continued survival; it can be no merely optional pursuit or interesting side-line and itself survive.

So it is that religion concerns itself with helping man solve his very practical problems; or, better, in solving his practical problems primitive man finds that he has need of religion. He discovers that after he has used his utmost skill and made his supreme effort, success at hunting, fishing, agriculture, warfare, or producing offspring may still elude him. Fish or game may suddenly desert its usual habitat; an unexpected drought may wither his crops and destroy his next

winter's food supply; disease may carry off his children and cattle. To him it is clearly evident that there are forces here with which ordinary means cannot cope; frequently he is of the opinion that a malign spirit or hostile human magic is at work. Hence he turns to magic and religion for the most practical of reasons—to keep alive. He does not really confuse his means and techniques, as we sometimes assume, seeking to use prayer or spell to replace honest effort. (That is left for his more civilized brother to attempt.) To him religious methods are a needed supplementation to other methods, because they deal with a kind of obstacle which ordinary skills cannot overcome.

As one of the important areas of human living, sex is ringed round with many regulations and taboos. Both its mystery and importance mark it out as a natural area for religious and magical ritual. The sexes are fully segregated in many primitive societies during the adolescent years, and mating procedures are carefully regulated; puberty is often marked by elaborate ritual initiations into adult society; and after mating no religious pains are spared to insure the happy and successful birth of many children. All the more is this crucially important in societies where infant mortality runs high. If there are some societies, like the Eskimo, where sexual relations seem relatively casual, they are the exception among primitives rather than the rule.

Thus it is that we find primitive religion deeply concerned with such things as food, clothing, weather, crops, warfare, health, and fertility in man and beast. Religion is here a device to deal with the spiritual and supernatural forces which, for reasons best known to themselves, may be thwarting or attacking man. He will therefore seek to divert the anger of the hostile spiritual forces from himself to others by magic charm, or to placate them by substantial offerings and elaborate ceremonial; and he will seek by some of the same means to enlist the services of the well-disposed spiritual beings who he hopes are to be found about him. At this cultural level, the religious expression is eminently practical and materialistic, though not entirely without intimations of a larger scheme of things and insight into more spiritual values.

This religious concern with practical values continues long after culture has developed beyond the primitive or preliterate stage. Many of the classical religions of antiquity, like the Assyrian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman, concerned themselves considerably with such affairs. As everyone knows, the Greeks and Romans had their gods and goddesses of the seasons and of fertility, as well as guardian spirits of the household and its food stores. Somewhat in the same vein we find many charms and prayers in the *Atharva-Veda* of the Hindus. Below is a good example, on the borderline between magic and religion, in the form of a charm against sterility:



From thee we banish and expel the cause of thy sterility.  
This in another place we lay apart from thee and far removed.

As arrow to the quiver, so let a male embryo enter thee.  
Then from thy side be born a babe, a ten-month child, thy hero son.

Bring forth a male, bring forth a son. Another male shall follow him.  
The mother shalt thou be of sons born and hereafter to be born.

With that auspicious genial flow wherewith bulls propagate their kind,  
Do thou obtain thyself a son: be thou a fruitful mother-cow.

I give thee power to bear a child: within thee pass the germ of life!  
Obtain a son, O woman, who shall be a blessing unto thee. Be thou a blessing unto him.

May those celestial herbs whose sire was heaven, the earth their mother, and their  
root the ocean,  
May those celestial healing plants assist thee to obtain a son.

Or once again:

Spring high, O barley, and become much through thine own magnificence:  
Burst all the vessels; let the bolt from heaven forbear to strike thee down.

As we invite and call to thee, barley, a god who heareth us,  
Raise thyself up like heaven on high and be exhaustless as the sea.<sup>1</sup>

As human skill and science increase, this practical and instrumental use of religion tends to dwindle. Mankind becomes progressively more able to deal successfully with the hazards of its environment. Man can cope better with famine, disease, and premature death, and feels himself more and more the master of his world. He develops a system of mechanical explanations of happenings; he does not as often refer each natural event to the direct action of a spirit or god. Sometimes religion has helped toward this technical control of the environment by giving man confidence that a divine purpose was leading him on in his conquest of the earth's resources, and by providing him with faith in the systematic and intelligible nature of the universe. But frequently, as an organized institution, it has opposed the actual steps taken to achieve such conquests. It has rejected the explanations that growing science has given, because of their conflict with its own, and on the grounds that man was taking too much into his own hands, seeking to become wise and powerful beyond his divinely ordained limitations.

<sup>1</sup> Robert O. Ballou, ed., *The Bible of the World*, Viking Press, 1939, pp. 28, 29. From *The Hymns of the Atharva-Veda*, E. J. Lazarus and Co., tran. Ralph Griffith (2 vols.), 1895.

Despite our increased control of our environment and the consequent lessening of the practical use of religion—so that men seed clouds with particles of silver iodide rather than pray for rain, or use drugs to cure disease rather than charms—an interest in the fulfillment of physical needs has not been entirely removed from the religious sphere. For man is still not the complete master of his fate or in absolute control of his world. He has not been able to escape many of his limitations, entirely overcome his frustrations, or eliminate the hazards of living. Indeed, his new control of the physical world has created new hazards undreamed of by the primitive. Nor has death, either of individuals or perhaps of the human species, yet been conquered by science. The truth is that we are still essentially in the same predicament as primitive man: the ultimate issue of our best efforts is still often beyond our power to guarantee. We are still finally dependent on forces and powers beyond our control by ordinary physical means; and so it is that even in a scientific age we cannot readily avoid an ultimate dependence on the universe for physical necessities; and in the recognition of that dependence we sustain a religious relationship to it in some sense.

## 2. *Social Needs*

The second area of human needs, the social, is just as basic to man as his physical necessities. Man cannot live alone—or at least he cannot live alone and like it. He is incurably gregarious; and he cannot be shamed out of his sociability by terming it a mere animalistic herding instinct. At every human level, from the near-animal to the most civilized, efforts at mingling with his own kind and achieving a social response have occupied an amount of man's time second only to time spent in the pursuit of physical necessities. Indeed, even some drives that we usually call physical actually combine physical and social elements, especially the sexual.

Now just as surely as man is inevitably social, so religion inevitably concerns itself with group life. Indeed, religion probably attains group expression sooner rather than later. As we have noted in the previous chapter, the fellowship or group expression is a distinguishing mark of religion. If religion has not arrived at the stage of development in which it can create its own peculiar type of fellowship, it will throw its cloak of sacredness about other fellowships which it finds already in existence. And this is done, not deliberately as a rule, but almost unconsciously. The group spirit of loyalty and devotion to the common welfare is closely allied to religion, and at primitive levels almost indistinguishable from it. Hence when the first human societies appeared—as far as we can tell—religious sanctions were there too, binding family, clan, and locality together, thus achieving both sacred and secular fellowship in one framework of social structure.



Since we shall study the social structure of religious groups at length in the next Part, nothing more need be done here, except to observe the way in which religion develops and extends the scale of the achievement of human fellowship. It stimulates and intensifies the natural human fellowship of human beings with each other in a way unknown outside the religious group. Not only are the members of the religious group bound together in the usual social fashion for the obvious reasons of economic advantage, sexual satisfaction, and mutual protection; they are bound together by specifically religious ties as well.

The religious group is united by bonds of peculiar strength in its common beliefs, its tradition, its sense of group solidarity, and especially by its distinctive rituals. Not that nonreligious groups do not have their traditions and ancient customs; but the religious tradition is of unusual cohesive power just because it is religious. For the unity of the religious group is more than a meeting together to indulge in the observance of group customs; it is a deliberate attempt to achieve communion with the object of its worship, to create and nurture proper relations with the supernatural. Indeed, this interest in extending the human fellowship to communion with the divine is more often than not the very basis for the group meeting together as a group. Even where the natural grouping of family, community, or clan may establish the *physical* nature of the religious group (that is, where these natural groups are also religious groups), this social reference to the more-than-human is a decisive factor in its consciousness. Here in the religious group the desire for fellowship is projected to the cosmic level, and the very effort so to extend it binds the inter-human fellowship even more closely together.

It is at this point that religion begins to distinguish itself from magic. For magic is purely utilitarian, seeking only the means to achieve the human will in the world, seeking only the stratagem or device that shall *force* the super-human to serve the human. Religion begins to seek a *response* from the larger environment, for its own sake, that is, without ulterior motives. No matter how much fellowship man may have with his kind, such fellowship often leaves him lonely, and perhaps ultimately frustrated. And it is in the religious life that mankind seeks the more-than-human response, searching for an assurance that he is not ultimately alone in his world.

There are some qualifications of this statement, but they are not important. One is that some primitives seem to have little observable "hunger for the infinite." They satisfy themselves with the close-at-hand, and seem afraid, if anything, of the power of the spirits about them. But we must observe that though we may call them religious, their religion is in the embryonic stage of magico-religion; characteristically as religion and culture have developed, men *have*

reached out for this cosmic support and companionship. It characterizes the fully developed human being and his religion more than the primitive.

The other qualification sometimes made is that those religions that emphasize a rather impersonal conception of the supernatural—from the primitive mana up to the Hindu World-Soul, in which meditation rather than prayer is the typical form of devotion—will not fit into this pattern. Yet the American Indian, who sought to gain for himself a greater portion of the power of orenda (the equivalent of mana), or to see a vision of his totem animal, was but seeking some sort of response to his religious devotion. And the Buddhist or Hindu meditative trance, for all its losing of the self in the “not-self,” for all its lack of words of prayer or sense of communication with a personal power, is also a finding of the universe responsive to human need. Those who come out of these trances report a sense of refreshment and illumination surpassing that given by any other experience, a contact with the quality of infinitude that fulfills the same religious function for them as the sense of communion and companionship with God does for the theist.

### 3. *Achievement of Personal Significance*

A third area of human need and religious concern is that of the achievement of personal significance. This is no doubt peculiar to human beings—more so than the desire for physical and social fulfillment. Perhaps the beasts desire to achieve such significance too, and attempt it in obscure forms largely hidden from us, as in the courting dance of some of the birds, for example; yet for the most part animals seem to go little beyond the desire to release instinctive urgencies, to associate themselves to some extent with others of their kind, and limit their self-fulfillment to filling themselves with food. Man, however, distinctly and explicitly yearns to achieve a sense of personal significance.

This significance must be achieved in the face of three great threats. One is the threat of an engulfing nature. For the primitive this is a truly grave danger, though he is not very articulately aware of it. His meager culture, his few mechanical devices, and his narrow advantage over animality of an only partially developed self-consciousness, even when taken together are but a slight bulwark between him and the brute environment around him. And it sometimes seems as though even that slight difference embarrasses him, and that he is trying as far as possible to shrink back unnoticed into the nature which gave him birth, lest that nature punish him for being too different from it. Indeed, he frequently looks on nature as hostile to him—not merely indifferent, as his more civilized brother regards it.

Religion comes to be man's great support in this rather reluctant climb out of his natural origins. Of course man's increasingly elaborate cultural patterns



and mechanical inventions set him apart more and more from nature; but he needs a deeper than mechanical assurance that he is of significance and that the forces of nature will not suck him and his achievement back into themselves without remainder. Religion gives him this confidence by assuring him that he is both the same and yet different from the nature of which he is a part. Animism, for example, tells him that the world is inhabited by invisible spiritual forces, somewhat like his own self. Though these forces are sometimes hostile, on the whole they represent a reinforcement of his position as man. For some of them are friendly as well. And besides, whether they are hostile or friendly, man is no longer in a blank universe, a spiritual orphan without parent or family, but is dealing with spiritual beings somewhat akin to himself.

It is this sense of the common spiritual quality of the universe and of man that religion expresses and emphasizes in its ceremonial, both increasingly and more clearly as it develops. Religious rituals express both the fact that man is basically at home in the universe and that his at-homeness is of a spiritual sort. It is his *spiritual* kinship with the world that is significant, they say, not his physical relationship; his most fundamental dealings with the universe are spiritual rather than mechanical. Hence man comes to feel his difference from the universe or at least from that part of it which is most obviously physical. Thus he becomes confident through the offices of religion that his difference from the physical is not an accident, and at the same time that as a spiritual being he is not a fearful monstrosity in the cosmos, but part and parcel of its being.

There is also the danger of being engulfed by his society. For while man has strong drives toward the society of his fellows, as we have observed, he also desires to maintain a certain quality of apartness from the crowd as well as from nature; he does not wish to be a mere unit in a social group and nothing more. At the primitive level this urgency to be an individual in one's own right is not as strong, for primitive man cannot bear to be too much alone from his fellows either physically or spiritually, because of the meagerness of his own inner resources; and there is always an upper limit to the amount of loneliness that any man in any culture can endure. Yet as cultures advance, man's desire for individual significance increases. And here religion aids immensely, both directly and indirectly. It creates an inwardness of life and thought by its emphasis on the spiritual dimension of that life. By it man is taught to consider his feelings, his thoughts, and his intentions to be of great significance. So also does religion channel to him divinely sanctioned and sometimes peculiar moral demands, by obedience to which he may separate himself from his more conventional fellows in terms of widely differing behavior. And there is also the fellowship of faith in which the religious group draws somewhat apart from

the larger society, and gives the individual within it a sense of social and spiritual significance he could not achieve outside it.

Finally, there is the perpetual sense of frustration and failure that man must struggle against in his quality as a finite creature. Comparatively he is physically weak; he is subject to illness; he cherishes near-infinite desires but has only very finite capacities to realize them; and his career is ended by the finality of physical death. There is not a culture in the history of mankind that has not recognized in one way or another this inherent limitation to which man is subject, and given expression to it in the more somber tones of its ritual, art, and literature.

Here, too, religion has sought to meet the threat to the sense of human significance. It has sought to convince man that he is a child of the spiritual forces of the universe, and to urge him to seek communion with them, thus expanding his earthbound horizons. Though the limits of human strength seem to doom man to the infinite frustration of his infinite desires and the perpetual futility of failing to realize his idealizations, religion has encouraged him to believe that his desires will not be permanently or completely frustrated, because basically the universe is on his side despite surface appearances. Thus religion has been the home of many fondly cherished hopes of significance, cherished against a good day to come. And over against the foreboding sense of impending death and annihilation, religions have consistently presented the hope of a continuing life after death.

#### 4. *Esthetic and Intellectual Satisfaction*

Man does not live by bread alone, neither entirely by bread broken in fellowship with human beings nor divine companions; nor is his personal significance fully achieved in the promise of a future life. There are also the esthetic and intellectual needs. And though in specific form they are late-flowering in the history of the human race, they have never been entirely absent from culture at any level. Perhaps one might say that it is only their specialized forms that are tardy in appearing. For there are many traces to indicate that prehistoric man had begun to experiment with color and form in his tools and weapons, and that now and then some individuals had begun to draw pictures of the animals about them on the walls of their caves or to make esthetic designs. Indeed, some of the primitives we know today—at least those in the upper regions of primitivism like the Hopi Indians—have become very skilled in some of their artistic products, judged by any standards.

More often than not these arts have been centered in religion—or, to put it otherwise, have been techniques of religious expression. Religion in nearly all cultures has been the mother of the arts, so that it is only recently that art has



been independent and secular, *i.e.*, nonreligious in theme and purpose. Art forms in sculpture, painting, architecture, and music have been used lavishly to represent gods, spirits, heroes, and to illustrate the teachings of religion, both in Orient and Occident. Only a very few religions, such as Judaism and Islam, have actually repressed religious art. Because of the strong scriptural prohibitions of any physical representation of the divine in each of these faiths, art has achieved only very minor forms within them, such as the discreet decoration of the synagogue walls with geometrical designs or the star of David. Shintoism, too, has been rather sparing of religious art, not so much from any fear of it as because of the carefully controlled expression of all Japanese art, and because the elaborate ceremonial of its religious performances has given it another expression of the esthetic. But Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity have been replete with esthetic expressions of every sort during most of their histories—ritual, pictures, statuary, interior decoration of shrines, massive temples, and religious music.

So also the human being has sought answers to certain of his fundamental questions from the very earliest times, and thought to find at least some of his answers in religion. He asks himself: Whence do I come, as individual and as human being? Whither do I go, as individual and race? Is there any plan in our going and coming which can be discerned? Of what sort is the nature which surrounds me—personal or impersonal—and what is its attitude toward me? How can I best relate myself to the forces or beings that ultimately govern this nature? Is there a scheme of significance to be found in the world of which I am a part?

The resources of religion have been set to answer these questions for man. The sacred writings of the faiths contain legends and myths that in poetic form give hints of the answers men may expect; or else the answers may be found in the stories handed down from generation to generation by the old men or the professional story-tellers. If there be some peoples, like the Australian primitives, who have no stories of beginnings and no explicit theory about divine beings, they at least have cultural patterns that prescribe proper modes of action for the kind of world in which they live. Because the cultural level is so low these questions have never explicitly been asked or answered, but the traditional pattern of religious totem-ritual holds implicitly both question and answer.

However much modern man may scorn the answers that past religions have given, their importance for the continuing life of religion cannot be overemphasized. To be sure, at the lower levels the intellectual element is not as important as the ritual and social elements; and religion at any level is much more than the sum of its theological ideas. Yet the answers that faith has given men in

search of a total significance for life have provided a most important element in the satisfactions religion offers. New religions replace old ones in many cases because of the better answers they give to man's fundamental queries. A case of this sort can be made out for the success of Christianity when it opposed Roman and Greek paganism, for example; and one of Britain's early Anglo-Saxon kings is supposed to have accepted Christianity in place of his old faith because it offered an answer to the question of man's life after death, which his old faith had lacked.

It is most interesting to notice how easily the esthetic and the intellectual blend in religion. When religion tries to express its sense of sacredness, to set forth its conceptions of man's ultimate destiny and spiritual nature, and to put its ideas about the invisible gods or spirits into tangible form, it turns very naturally to poetry, music, and art. It creates a vast array of symbols which to the initiated convey the secret or mystical meanings of the faith, remind them of events in the lives of its heroes, or arouse sentiments of loyalty and devotion. Indeed, symbolism has always been religion's most effective device for communicating its meanings. Among the illiterate it has been the only possible means; and even among the literate the vivid symbol speaks with a greater authority than any number of mere words.

We shall deal at length with the religious myth and ritual in Part II, but one illustration here may suggest how naturally religion can use art forms to express its ideas and values. Dancing, for example, has played a very important role in religious culture. One might say with truth that primitive religion is primarily a dancing religion. In the dance it finds its major religious expression; its dance gathers up in one form what other religions express in their architecture, literature, painting, sculpture, music, and worship.

So also popular Hinduism early in its history created classic religious dance forms that have persisted down through the centuries. Though puritanical Islam ordinarily frowns on the bizarre or flamboyant in religion, it has stimulated—or at least has not rejected—the inspired whirling dance of the dervish as a legitimate expression of its religious genius. And the dance has also made its appearance under Christian auspices, in the colorful festivals of medieval Europe, the celebrations of some Russian sects, and among the Shakers of America who made their group dances a central part of their worship. Even now it is being revived in some eminently respectable Protestant churches under the form of combined rhythmic and choral presentations. Obviously such expressions gather up in themselves a large number of satisfactions. There is the sheer physical exhilaration of it; for the primitive there is the very practical value of supposedly assuring fertility, rain, or success in warfare; the dancer communes with the spirits, becoming possessed by them as he dances; the



major traditions of the faith are dramatically taught in the ritual dance motions; and most of the dances induce a considerable measure of human fellowship as well. What more complete welding of religious and esthetic values could one ask?

One further thing remains to be said, by way of a reminder of the basic contention of these chapters: that religions are in some sense a unity. In the context of our present discussion we can consider them as basically alike because they all present themselves as ways of satisfying man's basic needs, needs much the same the world over and throughout human history. Each religion seeks to do it in the cultural scene of which it is a part. This means that the specific answers given to intellectual questions, and the particular ways in which the physical and social needs are satisfied, may vary widely. A Southern Presbyterian, a Vishnuite Hindu, and an African Bantu, will not satisfy their physical, social, personal, and esthetic needs in the same religious manner. In their answers and fulfillments, therefore, religions vary among themselves greatly; that is the ground on which we may distinguish them from each other. But in the needs they seek to satisfy and the questions they seek to answer, they are one.

## Chapter VI

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### SOME DEFINITIONS

In the two preceding chapters religion has been described in two different but supplementary ways: (1) In terms of its distinguishing marks. We observed that it employed the basic distinction of sacredness to indicate the presence of the supernatural, and created its own specialized techniques of approaching the supernatural through worship and fellowship, which together constituted a way of salvation. (2) In terms of its fulfillment of the basic human needs of physical, social, personal, and esthetic-intellectual satisfaction. Now we must turn to the difficult but necessary task of trying to define religion.

If religion has not yet been satisfactorily defined it has not been for lack of effort. One might regard the many books dealing with religion as definitions of it, though rather long-winded ones. But neither have there been lacking short, concise definitions of sentence length. Every man has tried his hand at defining in a few well-chosen words the essence of this unity-in-diversity that we call religion. In his *A Psychological Study of Religion* James Leuba lists some fifty such definitions, yet by no means includes them all.

Perhaps the effort clearly to define religion in short compass is a hopeless task. The difficulties are immense. If in the interest of emphasizing the unity of religion we make a compact definition, we often end up by making it so narrowly specific that only a small part of what men have called religion is included. Such definitions may reflect only one phase of religion, such as the individualistic, personal side of it, to the neglect of the social aspects. Other definitions have done exactly the reverse, by making religion purely a group phenomenon. Some have overemphasized the primitive form of religion, and said, in effect, "Here is the pure essence of it among the Australian or African aborigines." Their opponents, in rightful but unbalanced protest, have defined religion in terms of the highest or most developed form they know, and denied the title to anything less. And still further, many have coined a definition that is only a disguised form of their own faith, or perhaps an idealized statement of what they think religion ought to be but actually is not.



On the other hand, if we are anxious to include all the varied manifestations of religion and not have it crop up like the fabled magician in ever new and unexpected forms when we think we have taken care of every eventuality, then our definition may become too general. It will be a large basket that includes something of everything and thereby defines nothing; like the philosophical term "being," it will indicate that something is there (in the basket) but not quite what.

Whether we can arrive at a truly descriptive and adequate definition of religion is then a real question, especially when so many have failed. It may be that it is not as important to define religion as it is to recognize it wherever it appears and to understand it. But in either case it may be of value to notice some types of definitions that have been made and to criticize them. We may then know better what we do or do not mean when we use the term religion.

### 1. *Unfriendly Definitions*<sup>1</sup>

There is a class of definition that defines much more the attitude of the definer than the thing defined. One gets a splendid view of the prejudices of the author of the definition, but not much besides—particularly if he is opposed to what he defines. So it is with this first class of definition, which can properly be called definition by epithet.

Many opponents of religion have defined all religion as illusion, and an evil illusion at that. Long ago Lucretius in his *De Rerum Natura* stated his disbelief and dislike by defining religion as the "fear of the gods, which is the cause of all evil." He might well have written, "fear of the nonexistent gods." Much later Salomon Reinach described religion as "the sum of the scruples which impede the free exercise of the human faculties"—a definition that many of the humanists (those who believe in man but not in God) would accept. Giuseppe Sergi attaches the following label to religion: "pathological manifestation of the protective." A recent popular author in the field of religion says the same thing more poetically:

By the word faith we mean that indispensable—and therefore imperishable—illusion in the heart of man that, though he may seem a mere worm on the earth, he nevertheless can make himself the lord of the universe. By the word religion we mean one specialized technique by which man seeks to realize that illusion.<sup>2</sup>

Another statement of the same hostile sort is one that has been bandied about for so long that it has become anonymous. It is the suggestion that religion has

<sup>1</sup> For the general scheme of classification and some of the examples used below the author is indebted to Warren Nevius, in *Religion as Experience and Truth*, Westminster, 1941, Chapter I.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Browne, *This Believing World*, pp. 29-30.

been and is a device of priests and religious flunkies to keep themselves in bread and butter and jewelry. Marxians have given it a modern form. Say they: Religion was originally a power device or class stratagem by which the professional religious class achieved mastery over the masses in the more primitive societies; or in later times they paid their way, in the eyes of their capitalist rulers, by promising heavenly compensation to the lower classes for their present evil lot (pie in the sky, by-and-by), thus pacifying their discontent. This description of religion has some grains of truth in it, as we have noted in our discussion of religious origins. Crafty priests there have been; and there are many sad chapters in religious history in which unworthy, power-seeking clergy have played leading roles. But this is far from "explaining" the totality of religion; the religious life and need are far too broad, and too deeply rooted in human life, to be so easily accounted for or so readily described in such prejudicial terms.

What shall we say then of such definitions in general? Their truest description seems to be that they are not definitions at all, but rather campaign slogans or hostile war cries. There is little of careful consideration here of the real issues or factors involved; there is primarily only antipathetic or prejudiced emotional content. Such definitions or "explanations" chiefly define religion by reducing it to trivial and unworthy elements, usually of the most primitive sort, or seek to explain its meaning by explaining religion away into a disreputable nothingness.

## 2. *Descriptive Definitions*

There have been others, however, who have been genuinely in earnest about trying to define or describe religion in terms of its central meaning or essential character, and not concerned simply to discredit it. If their own viewpoint shows in the definition, it is not because of deliberate perversion of fact or conscious prejudice. To some such examples we now turn.

### a. *Religion Is Belief*

Some have defined religion as that which a man *believes* about ultimates. And we must immediately acknowledge the importance of belief in the religious framework. For though religion on the lowest level of primitive life has little if any stated doctrine, and though ritual probably always comes before doctrine in the historical growth of religion, the intellectual formulations of religion are of vital importance to it. Even at these lower levels, certain ideas about the world and the way one ought to act in it for his ultimate best interests are dimly sensed, if not explicitly stated. The patterns of taboo that govern so much of primitive life imply a certain kind of universe in which it is best to



act thus and so in order to safeguard the life of the group. Shot through the myths and the ritual patterns of primitivism are many more such assumptions and almost-creeds, though they may be in highly symbolic form. For the ritual form has always within it a core of idea.

Later, of course, if religions develop beyond primitivism, they usually elaborate doctrines in considerable detail; they expand, systematize, and develop the embryonic ideas contained in the earlier religious life. Much of this occurs as the result of the work of individual geniuses who take old themes but give them new form; or else they grow out of the new political, economic, and social group experience. These new forms are preserved in the sacred writings, stated in official creeds, expounded in books and teachings, and in turn stimulate new ritual forms for worship and new standards for conduct. And more often than not such developed religions present their case to the outside world primarily in terms of doctrinal statements.

It is not surprising then that many students of religion have thought of it primarily in terms of idea and belief. Below are a few examples of statements by those who take this view:

A belief in an invisible superhuman power . . . together with the feelings and practices which naturally flow from such a belief.<sup>3</sup>

Religions . . . are . . . perfectly one in the tacit conviction that the existence of the world with all it contains and all that surrounds it is a mystery ever pressing for interpretation. (Herbert Spencer)<sup>4</sup>

. . . a belief in an Ever-living God, that is, a Divine mind and will ruling the universe and holding moral relation with mankind. (James Martineau)<sup>5</sup>

. . . the faculty or disposition, which . . . enables man to apprehend the Infinite under different names and varying disguises. (Max Müller)<sup>6</sup>

. . . man's ultimate attitude toward the universe, summing up the meaning and purport of his whole consciousness of things. (Edward Caird)<sup>7</sup>

But important as beliefs are in religion, be they implicit or explicit, they are not the whole of it. Such an interpretation would largely discount the right of primitive religions to be called religions. And there is in addition the rich esthetic and emotional life of religion, which almost lives an independent life of its own within the religious structure. Emotion attaches itself somewhat indiscriminately to doctrines, in fact, so that the Buddhist cherishes a belief in the unreality of the individual soul as warmly as the Christian does in its eternally

<sup>3</sup> *Webster's New International Dictionary*, 1945 ed.

<sup>4</sup> James H. Leuba, *A Psychological Study of Religion*, Macmillan, 1912, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 354.

indestructible nature. There are also the moral attitudes involved in religion and the personal devotion of the individual to a religious way of life. And besides all these there is the social and institutional life that grows up about any faith within a few years, powerfully affecting its historical development. Religion does indeed mean to say something, it does intend to be true to reality in its ideas, but its rich full life can never be confined to a mere statement of intellectual beliefs.

#### b. *Religion Is Feeling*

Those who have felt that the intellectual effort to define religion in terms of doctrine was dry and narrow have turned to other types of definition. A very popular one of another sort has been that which describes religion as primarily an emotional attitude. That is, religion is how a man *feels* about ultimates. Friedrich Schleiermacher, a German theologian of the early 19th century, was very influential in initiating the strong modern trend in this direction when he defined religion as "a feeling of absolute dependence." He insisted that this religious dependence was distinctively different in quality from other such feelings of dependence—it was absolute and they were relative. Following his cue many theologians have tried to discount the worth of the rational or intellectual element almost entirely, and have frequently spoken of *religious experience* as taking its place. It is specially interesting to note how popular such anti-intellectualism has been and still is in a religion like Christianity, which has produced so many theological and creedal statements.

Three or four definitions of this sort may be of interest. Some of them show a deliberate attempt to get away from the inadequacies of considering religion as only idea.

Religion is clearly a state of mind. It is also clear that it is not exclusively the acceptance of certain propositions as true. It seems to me that it may best be described as an emotion resting on a conviction of harmony between ourselves and the universe at large. (John McTaggart)

Religion is the aggregate of those sentiments in the human mind arising in connection with the relations assumed to subsist between the order of nature (inclusive of the observer) and a postulated supernatural. (Daniel G. Thompson)

For theology to seek a basis in metaphysics and not in the certainties of the religious experience, would be to lean on an arm of flesh and to distrust "the spirit of the living God." (W. Herrmann)<sup>8</sup>

One further statement of this same general position should be noticed because of its great recent influence in the Western world. Rudolf Otto in his book *The*

<sup>8</sup> Leuba, *op. cit.*, Appendix, pp. 349, 351.



*Idea of the Holy* considers religion to be essentially a feeling of awe and mystery gained from some contact with the infinite Other, *i.e.*, the mysterious spiritual Presence which surrounds man. His words are stirring. He tells us that this feeling

may at times come sweeping like a gentle tide . . . it may burst up in sudden eruption . . . it may become the hushed, trembling, speechless humility of the creature in the presence of—whom or what? <sup>9</sup>

These definitions include an element sadly lacking in the first set. Anyone who has observed or experienced religion at firsthand will realize the tremendous emotional power that religion has. No definition which we can frame or understanding that we can gain about our subject can rightly neglect the strongly emotional nature of religion. We shall have occasion later (Chapter XXII) to observe that one of the great patterns of salvation, widespread among religions, is that of devotion.

But having said that, we must go on to say that neither is religion only or all emotion. Emotion is always a response to something, a feeling about it. What that "it" is, is most important to know. Love, fear, joy, exaltation, may be excited by many different stimuli. An emotion therefore is religious only because it is about religious objects or ideas; it is not religious merely because it is emotional. An emotional response to a religious symbol, or to the idea of God, or emotion aroused by fellowship with others of the same faith, should be called religious by virtue of its intellectual basis or content rather than its quality as an emotion.

This is why the intellectual idea or doctrine could not be kept out of the definitions of religion as emotion, any more than shades of feeling could be kept out of the definitions of religion as idea. The deep emotion aroused in religious matters—and perhaps there is no deeper anywhere—is caused by the circle of ideas with which religion deals: ideas of God, immortality, the destiny of the human race, love, personal health and welfare, indeed all the ultimate concerns of mankind. Such ultimate concerns are bound to arouse the deepest and most moving emotion known to man. And when the conviction of the truth of religious ideas is destroyed, then the emotional fervor of religion dries up as well.

### c. *Religion Is an Act of Will*

A combination of thinking and feeling would seem to result necessarily in some kind of action, or at least in the formation of attitudes and purposes that lead to action. The logic of this situation has not been lost on some observers, at least, who have felt that neither idea nor emotion adequately describes the

<sup>9</sup> *The Idea of the Holy*, Oxford, 1928, pp. 12-13.

religious attitude, but rather a still more inclusive category, namely the positive will-to-action. Hence definitions of this class could be summarized as declaring that religion is what a man *wills* to do about fundamentals.

Our present understanding of will or volition is different from what it used to be. By the will we do not mean a special power or faculty found in each individual, as a distinct psychological compartment. It is rather the dynamic activity of the whole self. It is the person all set to go, or going somewhere, under his own steam. It is the person getting ready to act or acting; it is attitude about to become action. Thus when we speak of religion as volitional we are saying that it is the whole person engaged in some sort of religious action; or that a person who is active in a certain way is religious.

Now those who have stressed the volitional side of religion have much on their side. Religion is very actionful—not always in terms of some strenuous activity like going on a crusade, or building a cathedral, but also in terms of the total “set” one gives his life. He determines to be another kind of person (with the help of divine power), or to take a different attitude toward others in the light of the standards of his faith, or to give a place in his life to divine guidance through prayer or meditation. Or, especially on the primitive level, we might say that religion is the strong will-to-live, seeking to ally itself actively with superhuman forces. In any case, wherever religion is at work it seems to be creative of a stir in men’s lives, influencing them to do many things, both inner and outer, which they would otherwise not have done, and to do so with tremendous self-discipline and energy. So marked is this quality in religion that we often think of it as intrinsically fanatical, that is, enthusiastically active in extreme measure.

Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher, suggested that religion was essentially “the recognition of all our duties as divine commands.” Or it might be termed the “enthusiastic temper of espousal” as William James does in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*.<sup>10</sup> Daniel Brinton considers the basic religious idea that of God as Will, and the main religious attitude as the joining of human will to Divine Will. Others speak of the religious attitude as “adoring co-operation” or the attempt to “express the complete reality of goodness through every aspect of our being.”

Two other definitions express even more clearly this conception of religion as a deliberately adopted attitude:

[Religion] is a commerce, a conscious and willed relation into which the soul in distress enters with the mysterious power on which it feels that it and its destiny depend. (Auguste Sabatier)

<sup>10</sup> This and following quotations from Leuba, *op. cit.*, Appendix, pp. 352, 357.



But religion, properly so called, begins when the soul consciously enters into communion with this higher-than-self as with an all-comprehending intelligence. (R. J. Campbell)

✓ These definitions are perhaps the best yet, since they include the idea of a total attitude and effort on the part of the religious man. Two dangers must be avoided here, however. One is that the idea of will must not be so much emphasized that we forget the intellectual content of religion and make it something irrational, a violent, incoherent will to act, a blind faith. Will, as well as emotion, has to do with ideas. We respond emotionally and decide to act on the convictions we have about realities—supreme realities in the case of religion. The second caution is that we must not make religion into a life only of good deeds—the moral life, that is—and forget the deep sense of fellowship and joy that has frequently characterized religious faith. For the life of faith is more than morality, and the purely moralistic definition leaves unaccounted for much of the distinctively religious experience of worship.

#### d. *Religion Is Loyalty to (Social) Values*

This interpretation is a rather new one. Some years ago Harald Höffding coined the phrase that defined religion as “the conservation of values,” which was immediately picked up by others and applied in some new ways. “Values”? Things or qualities we wish to achieve, or maintain, or increase; those qualities that we believe *ought* to be increased in the universe, because they are good, beautiful, or true.

We shall let some of these new interpreters of religion speak for themselves.

Eustace Haydon: The heart of religion . . . is the outreach of man, the social animal, for the values of the satisfying life.<sup>11</sup>

E. S. Ames: [Religion is the] conservation of the highest values [and the] consciousness of the highest social values . . . the man who tries to maintain religious sentiment apart from social experience is to that extent irreligious . . . while the man who enters thoroughly into the social movements of his time is to that extent genuinely religious, though he may characterize himself quite otherwise.<sup>12</sup>

W. K. Wright: Religion is the endeavor to secure the conservation of socially recognized values through specific actions that are believed to evoke some agency different from the ordinary ego of the individual.<sup>13</sup>

An ultimate in this type of definition is perhaps reached in the following:

<sup>11</sup> *The Quest of the Ages*, Harper, 1929, p. 68.

<sup>12</sup> Leuba, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>13</sup> *A Student's Philosophy of Religion*, Macmillan, 1922, p. 47.

I think, then, we may conclude, not only that Americanism is a religion, but that it is the noblest of all religions. . . . It is a religion, too, that unifies our present life with eternal life, and identifies our civil life with our religious life. It is a religion that can be taught to every human being, and that, when taught, will make all men brothers.<sup>14</sup>

A new feature makes its appearance here: religion is necessarily social, not merely individual. To be sure, we have seen before that fellowship was one of the distinctive marks of religious behavior, yet most of the definitions we have considered have spoken almost exclusively in terms of the isolated individual and his relation to the ultimate force in the universe. This has been true notwithstanding that many times the great world faiths have spoken of man's relationships to his fellow men as of the utmost religious importance. Not sacrifice, said Amos the Hebrew prophet, but justice, is what God desires. There are two commandments, and the second is to love your neighbor as yourself, said Jesus.

Here then is a needed emphasis, both from the observation of what actually occurs in the life of religion, and a concern with what religion perhaps *ought* to be. Always in religion the individual life and the group life go hand in hand; no good definition can leave out either element. But the last definition illustrates the weakness that develops here when the social aspect is pushed to an extreme. Could anyone really believe that religion can be equated with Americanism? that religion is the same as loyalty to nation or group-participation? that participation in Scouts, Rotary, and community improvement associations is what we mean by the word "religious"?

This general viewpoint characterizes what one branch of humanism today is trying to call religion. It will not do, however, to make society, even American society, our god. It is too full of failures and faults. And who is society but ourselves and our neighbors? How is religion then separated from self-worship? And it is also barely possible that American society or any given society will die sometime in the future, and then there will be no one to worship. The only reason that we look upon society in any case with reverence is because it embodies values that seem to come from a higher source in the Divine Will. That is, society gains its religious value, not from itself as such, but from the larger-than-social values that it seeks to incorporate in its structure and life. Nor is it religiously satisfactory to speak of reverence for values alone as the heart of religion. For religious men are concerned with fellowship and communion with the Source of values, as much as with the values themselves. It will not be enough to cherish beautiful values without knowing whether these values are

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Davidson, "American Democracy as a Religion," *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. X, pp. 37-39, Leuba, *op. cit.*, p. 356.



to be found "eternal in the heavens," enshrined in the will of God, or are merely social constructions that live and die with their creators.

### 3. *Synthesis of Definitions*

And now at last we are ready for a master definition of religion—if there be such. Our examination of different types of definitions has confirmed our worst fears—that religion is difficult, if not impossible, of satisfactory definition. Such a definition must recognize the importance of the intellectual formulation, must include the vividly emotional overtones of religious attitude, must remember that religion is a will to power and to goodness, and that it cannot be thought of in purely individualistic terms. Can any such definition be framed?

It is perhaps not of first importance that we should frame such a perfect definition synthesizing all of the necessary elements harmoniously, as long as we understand the importance of each of these elements in the total religious structure. But a few definitions have been framed that have definitely attempted to achieve such a synthesis, and in the thinking of the author are perhaps the best of the lot.

Eugene Lyman has defined the general specifications of the religious life for us as follows:

For religion the supreme principle is the maximum of harmonious interaction between man and the Deepest Reality of the universe.<sup>15</sup>

What is lacking here is the group activity, unless the author would imply it by the "maximum" of harmonious interaction.

Warren Nevius has written:

Religion is the total response of man's nature to what he apprehends of that Power recognized as supreme, and upon which he is convinced that his highest well-being depends.<sup>16</sup>

If he had written "total response . . . of man's nature in co-operation with his fellows," the author would have strengthened his otherwise first-rate definition.

L. de Grand-maison, in a quotation whose source I cannot locate, has the following comprehensive definition which is good, but something of an omnibus:

Religion is the sum-total of beliefs, sentiments, and practices, individual and social, which have for their object a power which man recognizes as supreme, on which he depends and with which he can enter into relationship.

<sup>15</sup> Eugene Lyman, *The Meaning and Truth of Religion*, Scribner, 1941, p. 86.

<sup>16</sup> *Religion as Experience and Truth*, p. 42.

Perhaps for conciseness and inclusiveness the following from Erich Fromm is the best:

Religion [is] any system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion.<sup>17</sup>

Here are included thought, emotion, and willed action, expressed in group life—which implies ritual and organization—and an object of reverence. If Mr. Fromm would include “cosmic” in his “frame of orientation,” and be willing to write “Object of devotion,” his definition would be, in the author’s opinion, the best in sight.

<sup>17</sup> *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, Yale University Press, 1950, p. 21.



## Chapter VII

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### RELIGION AND OTHER LIFE DISCIPLINES

"Religion is any system of thought and action, shared by a group, that gives the individual a cosmic frame of orientation and an Object of devotion." With Fromm's statement thus slightly amended, we may say that we have arrived at an adequate working definition of religion that includes all its essential elements and accounts for all its distinguishing marks. It avoids describing religion exclusively in terms of any *one* of its historical or psychological features, yet defines it clearly enough to make it distinctive.

One further area remains to be explored before leaving the consideration of the unity or similarity of religions. We must ask: How can we distinguish religion from the other important disciplines of human thought and life? For religion is not the only way of organizing our efforts, loyalties, and purposes—there are also the great patterns represented by science, philosophy, art, and morality. Religion has had much to do with all of these; sometimes as partner, sometimes as opponent or competitor, and still other times as almost indistinguishably joined with one or two of them. In view of much prevalent confusion about its relationship to all or any one of them, we must then ask: How shall we distinguish religion from science, philosophy, art, and morality?

#### 1. *Religion as Whole—Thinking and Living*

Religion can best be distinguished from its erstwhile partners, competitors, and imitators if we use our approved definition as a clue to the fundamental religious attitude toward human life and the universe in which it is lived, and then contrast with it the basic attitudes and interests of the other disciplines. It is primarily with attitude rather than content that we shall have to do, because all the major disciplines of human life deal for the most part with the same basic materials of human experience (though each has its particular emphasis), but differ in their interpretations of that experience. Their domains overlap and intermingle, especially with the religious domain, which is in some ways less specialized than any of the others. Hence no discussion of religious materials

versus philosophic or scientific materials, or description of the institutions created by one or the other, will fully distinguish them.

Since the key to distinguishing the disciplines from each other—and particularly the others from religion—seems to lie in the attitude each takes toward the materials with which it deals, and the way in which it seeks to relate man to his universe, we must ask in each case: What is the main-line interest here? What fundamental viewpoint or primary orientation to reality does this discipline or way of organizing human life represent? Once we have grasped this, in each case, the confusions arising between religion and other ways of life can be cleared away. And we may begin by saying that religion is built around the effort to *orient the totality of man's being and life toward the totality of the universe*. It is the attempt to set human wholeness, individual and social, in relation to cosmic wholeness.

This is the essential meaning of our preferred definition of religion. It is a system of thought and action—that is, it is inclusive of the whole person in the total direction of his personal energies. It is the main thrust of his thinking, feeling, and acting all at once; it is the basic intention and purpose of his whole life process. Thus religion is a jealous mistress and concerns herself with what a man does with the wholeness of his living.

It is equally ambitious in the goal it proposes for this unified thrust of the living person's total energy; for the religious discipline seeks to relate the total man in a personal way to the total nature of things—that is, to the cosmic order. There are evident here, of course, two great assumptions that all religions make in one form or another: (1) That there is a unity about the world in which we live that would enable us to deal with it, could we make contact with it; (2) that we do make contact with it in various ways, but especially by means of religious techniques. This is the reason for amending Fromm's definition to read "*cosmic* frame of orientation."

There are some who would disagree with such an interpretation of religion—especially the latter half. With the first part of it—that religion is what a man does with his totality—most people would agree. A total devotion is what seems to be characteristic of the religious attitude, which is what we mean when we say that a man has made stamp collecting, or business, or the study of English his "religion." This, however, seems to be a relative—perhaps even a near relative like a first cousin—to religion, rather than the individual under discussion; it is an imitation of the real thing, but not the thing itself. We have here a slight amount of religious emotional coloring and scent which has rubbed off onto something else that is in itself nonreligious, but nothing more.

To the writer, however, religion always and at all levels seems to imply a reference and attempted relationship to something larger than the individual.



Nor is society—which the humanist seeks to put in the place of the super-human—quite sufficient as an object of religious reverence. That object needs to be an Object, or Objects, of more than human stature. Even at the primitive level—where there may be little more than the idea of an impersonal mana that man reveres and seeks to use in the most beneficial way—the object of devotion represents a more-than-human, a nearer to cosmic-scale force of some sort. The customs and taboos he follows have for him the force and meaning of eternal laws, which are established because they are part of the order of reality. He would not put it in these words, of course, but such a significance is implicit in his attitude.

This attitude gains clearer expression with the idea of human communion with spirits, whether they are conceived as ancestral spirits or as definitely superhuman beings. In the absence of the concept of monotheism (one God only), the religious man seeks to relate himself to the spirits that actually seem to govern his daily life. But it comes to clearest expression with the monotheistic idea expressed in the Judeo-Christian tradition: "This is the first and great commandment, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Here the totality of man's powers is to be consciously and deliberately related to the most total or inclusive reality in the universe, God. For if God is not the whole of reality, He is the nearest to cosmic totality of any thing or being in existence.

This then is the basic quality of religion: The seeking to relate oneself with all one's powers to the most ultimate and comprehensive reality to be found in existence. Nothing less will do. All lesser realities must be evaluated in terms of the Greatest Reality, and in some way related to it. For the primitive man, who has no universal view, or the polytheist, who has no supreme God to relate himself to, this of course is impossible, literally speaking. Yet both do the best possible with the intellectual furniture with which their culture provides them. Both of them live in a *multiverse* rather than a *universe*, and therefore cannot achieve a unified reaction to the totality of reality or to its one governing force. But within these limits each seeks to relate himself as widely as possible, though his devotion must be spread among several competitors. The logic of religious growth, however, tends to push it on to some kind of monistic (one-world substance) or monotheistic (one God) view of the world.

In passing, it might be observed that though the main drive in religion is for the individual to associate himself closely with the ultimate reality, this relationship is seldom actualized in purely individualistic fashion. Religion is universally a group phenomenon, and religious individualism is one of its important products—though not a self-sustaining form of the religious life. Thus the effort of relating oneself to ultimate reality begins with public forms and group

rituals, and never entirely dispenses with them; the stimulus of the religious fellowship and group worship seems to be necessary to the religious quest, even in its most developed forms. Hence comes the importance in our definition of the words "shared by a group."

## 2. *Religion and Science*

This is a relationship of great current interest. A great deal has been said and written on this subject in the last seventy-five years, from both the scientific and religious sides. The tremendous impact of science on modern life and thought, its questioning of the truth of some religious teachings, and its status as a powerful challenger of the authority of religious tradition, have led to sharp differences of opinion.

In the eyes of many, the religious and scientific perspectives represent mutually exclusive ways of looking at and dealing with the world. Certainly, whatever the *right* relation between the two, its apparent absence presents one of the major cultural crises of our times. And though at this point we cannot possibly discuss the length and breadth of all the questions involved, we can attempt to distinguish the different orientations of the two disciplines, and suggest complementary rather than competitive viewpoints.

We may begin by comparing the goals that science and religion set before themselves. Science has two goals: to know, and to control. The former is represented by pure science, the latter by practical or applied science. In the first sense we might call science systematically organized curiosity—the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. As such it hopes to create an all-embracing system of explanations, one master theory or formula which will account for everything. There is also the fruitage of this curiosity, which is scientific technique, or scientific knowledge applied to the control of the world for the sake of human welfare. It is perhaps presumptuous for an outsider to say which is primary in science, curiosity or practically applied knowledge; but to hazard an opinion, it appears to the author that it is the practical side that finally wins out. The "pure" theoretical physics of Einstein is put to work producing atomic energy; commercially-successful applied science furnishes the financial and physical means for theoretical science to work, in the hope of its producing still more practical applications.

Religion is also practical, as we have seen—though perhaps in a slightly different way. Primitive man uses religious techniques quite unashamedly and directly to supplement his "scientific"—*i.e.*, magical—techniques in securing the things that he desires—food, cattle, wives, children. Here the religious and scientific goals are the same, though the means thereto vary slightly. But as both develop, a divergence takes place. Science, as the lineal descendant of magic,



concerns itself with material goals. It seeks the magic formula that will reduce a part of the world, at least, to understanding and submission. Now religion still desires the good gifts of physical necessities and material welfare, and seeks to control the world for human purposes; but some of its means or by-products begin to assume importance. As we earlier suggested, religion begins to value fellowship with the supernatural for its own sake, and to enjoy the techniques of worship for their beauty and solemnity, whether they produce material prosperity or not. These by-products become the "spiritual" values of religion, over against the "material" values of magic and science, and increase in importance as religion develops.

Nor does religion seek a complete knowledge of all the phenomena of the world—as both science and philosophy do, each in its own way. It seeks rather an effective knowledge of, and relation to, the most ultimate of all the levels of reality. It has a "higher" practicality, so to speak; it desires to know how to relate itself beneficially to reality at its center, not at its borders; it seeks not temporary betterment, but eternal welfare. And though the same basic desire—to control destiny—guides both science and religion, the forms and results are radically different. One undertakes physical manipulation and control, the other seeks spiritual adjustment; one gauges its success by immediate and tangible results, but the other strives for personal transformation.

This basic difference in attitude and goal produces a difference of interest, method, and results throughout the structures of science and religion. Scientific interest is in the *quantitative* or the measurable. Anything not capable of measurement is not of interest to science, because it cannot deal with it scientifically, *i.e.*, by experimentation, prediction, control; it cannot be calculated in terms of space and time. Religion, on the other hand, is interested in the *qualitative*, or the felt and appreciated. It speaks of "values"—that is, the qualities or personal relationships that man desires or cherishes, or fears and hates. It is concerned with distinctions like rightness or wrongness, good and evil, worth and beauty.

This means, of course, that the two go about their work in different ways. Science uses the data of the senses, what sight, hearing, and touch—made more sensitive by instruments—report of the world. To be sure, the logical necessities of thought—the hunches or intuitions of the genius—and human desires for order and unity, enter into scientific theories; but science seeks always and in all connections to check back to some physical manifestation, something that makes a physical difference somewhere, even if only the slight quiver of a needle on a dial. Religion does not neglect the evidence of the senses, but believes that values and appreciations, intuitions of goodness and truth, convictions about moral rightness, also have something to tell us about the world in which we live. In fact, it would usually be inclined to trust qualitative evidence



before quantitative; it is better to be "right" and alone than "wrong" and in a great company. It is inclined to give great weight to its intuitions, insights, and visions, believing that they are the voice of God or the spiritual "super-verse" that surrounds and permeates our physical universe.

The resulting attitudes and world viewpoints are such as we might expect. Science is thoroughly impersonal and physically factual, interested only in the individual plant, animal, or man in so far as he is the member of a class that is the illustration of some principle or law governing a large number. It seeks to be objective, eliminating personal likes and preferences. It explains the behavior of anything by the way in which it fits a general rule. It means by the "cause" of something, its former condition that has changed to its present condition according to uniform rules. When it *explains*, it tells how the change occurred—that is, the route by which change has arrived.

Contrastingly, religion is thoroughly personal in outlook. It is interested in Henry Smith as a person, in his feelings, and in his uniqueness as an individual—not merely in him as a member of the genus *homo sapiens*. It is deeply concerned about maintaining the inward individuality or personality of man—all that makes him different from other men and other creatures. This, in part, is what religion has tried to say in its doctrine of the *soul*. The soul is what you and I uniquely are, our continuing character as persons—which character religion hopes to conserve here and hereafter. And when religion explains an event, or seeks to provide a total explanation of the world, it is not as much interested in knowing how it came about as in knowing why. Is there a purpose, an all-over plan, a goal in view in the universe? Such are the peculiarly religious questions.

Each viewpoint needs the correction and fulfillment of the other—though there will always be a tension between them and their methods. Science will seek to push its factual explanations of *how* things come to be what they are, to the ultimate limits of knowledge, while religion will search for a *why* answer. But this tension need not—ought not—mean an exterminative battle. Religion needs to check the wild flights of its hopeful fancy by the scientific facts about the world. It needs expert advice on the techniques of achieving its goals. Its exclusive attention to man's inner life must not isolate him from the outer world of physical fact. And religion must honor the selfless devotion of many scientists to the pursuit of truth, as akin to its own spirit of devotion to the religiously worthy.

On the other hand, science must recognize *its* limitations. It separates a narrow segment of reality by a highly specialized method that prescribes the nature of the results it reports. It tends to be scornful, neglectful, or dogmatic about human values, with which it is not fitted to deal. It must, with its own proper



humility, consider its deeds in the light of their worth or goodness, set its narrowly specialized knowledge in the context of mankind's total wisdom, and not deny the legitimacy of the religious quest for cosmic purpose and meaning.

### 3. *Religion and Philosophy*

Philosophy and religion have often been housemates in the history of human cultures. Indeed, their relation has sometimes been much closer than that of mere fellow-tenantry of the same cultural abode. In some sense, at least, philosophy is the offspring or blood-relative of religion, developing religion's first intuitions and poetic interpretations of the nature of the world and man into a systematic pattern of thought. For example, in the culture of India today religion and philosophy are more like twin brothers than friends—or perhaps like father and grown-up son. For most philosophers in the Hindu tradition believe philosophy's goal to be salvation, which is also the main religious end-in-view; and philosophical speculation frequently leads to mystic ecstasy.

There is a somewhat clearer distinction between the two in the West, but the separation is by no means absolute—they are at least second cousins even here; many of the medieval philosophers were also Christian theologians. And while the modern period of philosophy—which is usually dated from Descartes onward—has many times declared the independence of the two, its thinkers have of necessity dealt with much essentially religious material. For how can one frame a world hypothesis, or include every part of human experience within the net of human understanding, and not deal somewhere with the great questions of human origins and destinies, the character of man, the nature of his world, and whether there be a total purpose or meaning in it all? Sometimes the word "God" is left out, but its essential content and significance are more often than not to be found in the substitute concepts.

How then shall we separate the two, since religion and philosophy both have an interest in the totality of things, and sometimes deal with the same ideas—indeed, ask the same basic questions? The answer is that their purposes in asking the same questions are somewhat different, and their interest in the totality of the universe is not the same. For the main drive of religion is to achieve a totality of relationship of the individual and his society to the universe, whereas that of philosophy is to provide a systematic and comprehensive thought pattern about the universe. That is, religion seeks *salvation* and philosophy seeks *understanding*. The philosopher, as a human being who cannot confine himself to understanding alone, may go on to seek salvation, or like the Indian philosopher use his understanding as a means to salvation; but when he does so he is stepping out of his narrower role as a philosopher and into his full role as a human being.

This basic difference of interest results here, as with science, in a parting of the ways, or at least a separation of function. In attitude and method the philosopher is more like the abstract scientist than the religionist. He seeks to compare ideas—all ideas about everything—with each other, in the hope of arriving at a systematic arrangement of them that will put each one in its proper place and leave nothing out. He too will tend to suspend judgment until he has more data, and will be on the whole contemplative in mood rather than active. His temper will be dispassionate and speculative, rather than emotionally committed.

Though philosophers may be religious and religious men be philosophers, the religious temper is obviously different. It is geared to action, even as is practical science. It speaks in the committed or convinced frame of mind, completely devoted to certain values or world views until the end of time. It busies itself with spreading its convictions among others, organizing brotherhoods and churches, reforming society, and seeking to achieve the salvation of the world. Its mood is highly charged with emotion, and it is impatient with the halting progress of philosophy toward Ultimate Truth, viewing such hesitation as an evasion of action by a cowardly sort of hair-splitting.

These two disciplines also have something of value to contribute to each other. Philosophy may teach religion to be discriminating with regard to the goods which it seeks to achieve; it may serve religion by criticizing its intellectual constructions (theology); and it may thus remind religion that its doctrines must carry the sense of truthfulness, as judged by impartial criticism, in order to carry conviction to men outside the fold of faith. Religion, on the other hand, reminds the philosopher that, both before and after being a philosopher, he is a responsible moral human being who must make decisions and take attitudes. There are decisions for action which every man must make in the course of living—at least partial truths and goods which he must espouse, over against partial evils and falsehoods which he must fight against, even though Truth may seem undiscoverable. Religion reminds the philosopher—if he will hear its voice—that philosophizing must lead to personal being and action, not away from it or evasively past it; that world hypotheses are not merely intellectual playthings, but also demands for personal commitment.

#### 4. *Religion and Art*

The relation of the religions to the esthetic is a curious one—both friendly and antagonistic, both much like it and yet vitally different. We have noted before how religion has stimulated and used art forms from time immemorial for its purposes, and has found the various artistic media peculiarly fitted to express its symbolisms. Even here in the West, where art and religion have



largely parted company, it is still true that the Christian faith has probably furnished painting, sculpture, and architecture with more themes than any other source.

There is indeed something about the artist that reminds one greatly of the religious genius. Each is trying to communicate a message to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear—a message which has for him the authority of a personal revelation. Each would say of his vision: “This is the way reality comes to me. I cannot but speak what I have seen and heard, and perhaps hope that some will understand what I am trying to say.” Many times—especially if we compare the mystic with the artist—each seems to be struggling to communicate something he finds difficult to express, but whose very vividness and potency irresistibly urge him to expression. Occasionally we find the religious mystic and the artist one and the same man, as in the case of the great Indian bhakti poet Tulsi Das of the 16th century, the Mohammedan Sufi mystics who took to writing religious poetry, and William Blake, English poet, painter, and religious mystic.

Yet there are distinctive differences in the total structures of the two disciplines. The esthetic viewpoint—somewhat like the philosophical—is contemplative rather than active. It surveys the world with its head cocked on one side, often with whimsy and irony, even more frequently with detachment. The artist has no plan, as a rule, by which to save the world—though art has sometimes been instrumental in breaking tyranny and unveiling sham. As a thorough-going individualist, the artist usually begs to be counted out of organized movements to better the world. More than anything else, he fears the lock step of social convention.

By contrast religion is both practical and group-minded—at least in the main and in the long run. It seeks to save the world, to pass on its systems of ideas and values, and to call men to committed action. It creates causes, organizes groups, and authors theologies. It has a world viewpoint, whereas individualistic art has none. When it employs art, it furnishes the artistic themes and the motive force behind them; and its genius—lonely though he may be—is produced by and ministers to the community of faith. More than the dull, trampling tread of convention, religion fears isolation from man and God. Where the artist may be content with his view of reality, because it is his, the man of faith wishes desperately to be sure that he is rightly relating himself by his faith to the supremest reality that he knows, and deeply craves companionship along the way.

##### 5. *Religion and Morality*

We come finally to a relationship which has been more intimate, yet characterized by more complexity and conflict, than any we have yet surveyed: namely,

the relation of religion to morality. Historically they have been Siamese twins, so to speak. At the primitive level, of course, the ethical and the religious are neither one clearly distinguished; and what there is of each seems almost identical with the other. Social customs have the practical force of divine laws; they are the way in which life has always been lived, and woe to anyone who disobeys. On him and the group many dire calamities of mysterious nature will descend. What is known of the spiritual forces of the universe indicates that they are against the violator of tribal taboo. And when distinct moral rules do make their appearance, they nearly always enter the cultural scene in the form of divine commandments, or as principles eternal in the heavens and on the earth.

A prime example of this is the early Hebraic religion, which is centered in the law of Moses. This law is a great composite of all sorts of regulations regarding religious rituals, civil life, and ethical standards. The latter are given precise formulation in the Ten Commandments. But our point here is that the whole of this is presented as the commandment of God, spoken through Moses. Thus the social rules of conduct and the beginning of ethical distinctions first appear as divine decrees. Nor is the Hebrew culture unique in this respect. Hammurabi—from whose Code Moses' law may have come in part—is pictured on monuments as receiving his code from the god Shamash. Indeed, one might read the roster of all the great moral traditions of the world today and say correctly that they have come from religious sources.

Yet our own Western culture, which has been deeply influenced by religion, often shows a decisive division between religion and morality. For alongside the Hebrew-Christian tradition of the unity of religion and morals was the Greek tradition of their separation. The Greeks turned to their philosophers, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, rather than to their religion, for ethical standards, because the morals of the gods of popular religion were not above reproach. Some of the goddesses were ladies of easy virtue, and the gods were often only supermen of superlustrous inclination. And besides, many of the religious fables seemed too childish to be true. Somewhat affected by the Greek example, and also by virtue of a gradual turning away from the dominance of the Christian and churchly pattern of life to the secular and humanist pattern of the Renaissance, Western thinkers have more and more frequently constructed systems of ethics that have little or nothing to do with religion.

Some of them would say that religion has hampered morality by hitching goodness and God up together, and trying to make human goodness depend upon divine commandment. Religion, they would say, has tried to enforce its moral ideals of justice and love by external sanctions: "Do justly and love, or else God will punish you"—which of course makes the whole business immoral. Also, they would go on to say, religion has blurred the sharpness of moral dis-



tinctions by insisting that Almighty God is perfect goodness. This means that we have to say that the physical world He has created and sustains is also morally good—in order to make our religious theory hold water. Obviously this world is not thoroughly good in any sense; which means that we end up by calling the evils and frustrations of our world religiously good, although our moral judgment insists they are ethically bad.

Others, more kindly, would acknowledge the past historical closeness of religion and morality to each other, and even allow the relation to be partly legitimate in the present. But they would suggest that morality is much the more important half. Indeed, they would insist that religion *is* essentially morality; its major hope is to make men ethically sensitive, and to create a good moral character in each of us. The whole apparatus of religious belief and symbolism can best be understood in such ethical terms; God against Satan is the moral struggle of man against his lower self, dramatized on a cosmic scale; the hope of life after death symbolically portrays the triumph of justice and goodness over injustice and evil; the rewards and punishments promised by religion are intended only to make its moral distinctions more solemn and binding. But once we have understood what ethical goodness truly is, we do not need to say that it is commanded by God and therefore good; we may simply say that it is humanly valuable and therefore humanly and sufficiently good—God to the contrary.

Here then is the nub of the problem: does moral goodness as we know it have any necessary or valuable relation to the ultimate nature of things? Does what our moral judgment says *ought* to be, depend in any way on what actually *is*? Is moral goodness any better if we say that God is good; or do we simply lower our moral standards to what we find actually existing in the world, and call it good because supposedly ordained by God's will? Should we not favor the good, even though we have to oppose the ingrained pattern of the universe?

The religious answer is, I take it, that there *is* a valuable and even necessary connection between God (or ultimate reality) and goodness; and that the latter depends on the former. When Jesus said that man must be perfect as God in heaven is perfect, he was bearing witness to religion's faith that the universe at bottom is good, and that man in striving for goodness is not following the creation of his own imagination, but tracing out the pattern of an eternal goodness. He becomes truly good by joining himself to that larger pattern of goodness that provides the stage on which he must play his part and the materials with which he must work. In religious worship man has glimpses of this Eternal Goodness, which calls him to serve it with his total self.

Thus in religion we have something more than is to be found in ethics as such. Ethics deals primarily with man in relation to himself and his fellows,

and his duties, rights, and obligations to each. It frames an ideal of perfection in terms of what a man in himself and among his fellows ought to be. But for religion, morality is only part of the picture—however important a part this may be. Man, as religion sees him, has a total responsibility to the universe of which his responsibility to his fellow is only one part; man must answer first to the Divine Righteousness and secondly to his human responsibilities. In fact, the measure of reverence he feels for the laws and customs that formulate these human responsibilities will depend on whether he believes they truly reflect the cosmic moral law. And the religious man will gain his moral drive, not so much from the sheer beauty of his ethical ideals, as from the sense that he is not alone in his moral struggle, but has fellowship therein with Eternal Righteousness, and is bound to human duty by a divine obligation.

We may say again here—as we said in connection with the other disciplines—that the disciplines of religion and ethics need each other. Religion, both in its theology and institutional life, must have the criticism of the best ethical insight to keep it from sanctifying the *status quo*. For when religion lives at a lower moral temperature than the nonreligious men in the world about it, it loses their respect and degenerates into a harmful superstition. Ethics, on the other side, needs the vision and power religion brings, lest it become simply a critique of manners and customs or a sterile making of rules. Religion can bring it a challenge to do what seems surpassingly difficult, even courage to dare the unpopular and the impossible; and it can transform dry moral duty into a service of love that the worshiper gives to his God.

## 6. Summary

If we are then to sum up the essential distinction between religion and the disciplines of science, philosophy, art, and morality, it will be found in the fundamental goal religion keeps always before it: To make a total personal response to the most ultimate reality in the universe. The names given to this Reality and the proposed modes of response to it may vary among religions, but the goal is the same; and it is the pursuit of this goal that distinguishes religion from all other disciplines of life and thought.

Now each of the other disciplines seeks only a partial personal response to a part of the universe. The scientist as scientist abstracts himself from the personal, the emotional, and the appreciative, and from seeking any ultimate purposes in the cosmos. To act fully as man he must step outside his purely objective scientific role. The philosopher seeks to be all-inclusive in his world hypothesis, but primarily as a thinker—not as an actor. He tends to abstract himself from the human social situation by intellectualism, so that the social reformer may say with point: philosophers have explained the world, now we



will *change* it. The artist is individualistic by instinct, and atomistic (partial) in his view of reality. He is a critic, a spectator, and a feeler of his own special and private feelings.

The earnestly moral person comes nearest the full-scale response of religion in his conception of a duty that must be done, or an inward standard of integrity according to which he must live to maintain his self-respect. Yet he too fails of the full responsiveness sought by religion when he cuts his ideals and standards loose from cosmic reality and wishes to say they are his own. In a word: *whether man recognizes it or not, he lives in the midst of a religious situation*. Whenever he acts in the full stature of his humanity, and does not evade it by partial responses or suspended judgments, he must do so as one who acts in the light of his best understanding of the total universe and his place in it.

What actual religion does is to take the implicit religiousness of man's situation in the cosmos and make it into a deliberate, conscious response to that cosmos—presumably at its deepest depth and highest height. In religion man is responding to the most and best of reality that he can find united in a single wholeness. Thus *worship* is the characteristic response of man as religious—a response that sets him apart from other men, or from himself as scientific, philosophical, artistic, or moralistic. For in worship man is seeking to respond with the totality of his self to that aspect of the universe about him, which best represents its unity and wholeness. It is his hope and conviction that he will find in worship an intelligible response that will enable him to act in ways harmonious to it. So it is that even though much of the actual fruit of worship comes later—in action in the other fields of human endeavor—it is in worship that he is most fully unified with himself and his world, and most completely human.

It is also because of the worshipful character of its response to the universe that religion characteristically creates its own distinctive human fellowship; for religion's fellowship is built around its life of worship. Men are drawn together religiously as they seek to extend their human fellowship to include the divine; or, to put it conversely, a sense of fellowship with the supernatural unites men about it in human fellowship also; and outwardly it is this worshiping fellowship that clearly distinguishes religion from other ways of organizing life. Scientists, philosophers, artists, moralists—some more than others—may join their efforts in a sort of brotherhood of common intellectual or professional interest. But their efforts produce no true ritual, nor any close-knit brotherhood approaching a fellowship of faith. Without doubt the worshiper's awareness of another Presence than that of his own or his brother's is the strongest of social cements.

## SECTION III

# RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

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### *Introductory*

In the preceding chapters we have been considering ways in which the multitude of religious manifestations among human beings are alike. We have successively surveyed theories of a common origin of all religions, outer features and distinctive practices characteristic of religions, the manner in which religions fulfill basic human needs, and finally the question of defining religion in contrast with other ways of organizing human thought and life. In other words, we have been trying to establish the right to use the term "religion," as well as "religions," with the confidence that it has some distinguishable meaning.

And what has been our result? We discovered that in terms of origins the best we could do was to point to some rather primitive forms of religious life that had possibly been common to many religions, but that we could say nothing about a universal first form of religious faith; and that even if we could, such roots would tell us little about the full nature or worth of later developments. We found that religions, through their institutions and practices, seek to distinguish between the sacred and the common parts of life, and value the sacred because of its embodiment of the supernatural. In this way they are one.

It became further evident that religions are alike in their attempts to fulfill the physical, social, personal, and esthetic-intellectual needs of men—though the first type of satisfaction tends to lessen as religions develop, and the latter three to increase in importance and be expanded in meaning and scope. A definition of religion would then seem to include necessarily the elements of a shared group thought and life directed to an Object of devotion, and to distinguish itself from other disciplines of thought and life by the wholeness or totality of its approach to the world in which man lives—the whole man relating himself to ultimate reality as a unity in all his personal attitudes and actions.

This general likeness of interest and basic orientation among differing religions would seem to give us the right to use the word "religion" with real meaning—and with a meaning which pretty well distinguishes it from the re-



mainder of human culture. But for the sake of both understanding and accuracy, we must not overestimate our accomplishment. We have only established the general structural likeness of religions to each other in terms of the sort of goal they all hope to gain and the kind of relationship toward reality they are all trying to achieve. In a word, we have found only that the word "religion" signifies that religious manifestations indicate the existence of a true species whose members can perhaps cross-fertilize each other.

This does not dispose, however, of the fact or importance of religious differences. All the vast variety of difference in every department of religious practice, thought, and attitude, stubbornly remains, despite the discovery of basic similarities. Though most religions might cross-fertilize each other by intercommunication of ideas, modification of each other's practices, and making of converts from another's fold—and these things *do* happen—the actual fact is that to a great extent the major varieties remain rather isolated from each other. Intercommunication is not often achieved—either because each faith jealously guards its faithful and competes with others for new converts, or because the level of culture and range of idea are so widely different among them.

Examples of this situation are not far to seek. Besides the great major divisions of religion on the vertical plane of different cultural levels, ranging from primitive up through racial-national and world-wide groupings, there are the criss-crossing lines of horizontal differences among competing faiths and sects all on the same general cultural level. For instance, we might consider that the modern world is divided in its religious allegiance among the following major faiths: Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, Islam, Judaism, and Shintoism. These all stand on a more or less competing basis, seeking to win converts from among the primitives or from each other in their respective areas of the world; and of this group three, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, claim to be universal religions, each of which desires to win all the men and women of the world to its way of faith.

Now each of the above major groupings has also its minor subgroupings, each numbering many adherents. Judaism is divided religiously into three camps; Islam has its four orthodox Sunnite schools of thought; Buddhism split centuries ago into the Mahayana and Hinayana traditions, and in countries like Japan has still further subdivided into a half-dozen distinguishable sects; Hinduism is only a name for a large number of widely variant schools of thought and manners of religious practice. And we are all familiar with the fact that Christianity divides itself into Greek Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism—and Protestant divisions into denominations or churches run well over three hundred. So much a fact are religious differences that one might almost agree with those who say that each of the two billion men and women

on the face of the earth has his own private religion different from that of any other individual.

Our problem in this section then is systematically to relate the unity we have discovered among religions to the differences which are also manifested by them at every turn. Obviously this cannot be done by any mere classification of all the varieties of religious practice and belief of the past and present. That would be an endless and largely profitless task—except for the curious and leisured researcher. For in the end he would have only a showcase full of curios, each with its appropriate label—if he should (improbably) live long enough to attach all the labels.

Our method of relating difference to similarity must therefore be more than specimen labeling. And a first step in this direction will be to describe the general relation of religious similarity to religious differences. It can be put in the following terms. *Religions are similar in that they seek to reach the same general goals, fulfill identical functions, satisfy like desires and needs, and answer the same questions.* Thus they all seek to relate man to the ultimate power or powers in the cosmos and to fulfill basic human physical, social, and esthetic-intellectual needs. In their common attempt to do this at all levels of culture, they are one, and may be called religion. They share common goals. *But in the methods by which they seek to do these things they are different.* The specific patterns chosen to fulfill social needs, the conceptions of the ultimate reality to which they seek to relate man, the answers they give to the basic questions all religions seek to solve, and the routes taken to reach the chosen goals, vary immensely. Hence in respect to means, religions are many.

To be sure, means and ends, routes and goals, are sometimes overlapping. The way in which one worships God may have something to do with the nature of the God one worships. Prayer as conversation may strengthen the conviction that God is personal; communion with reality in mystic trance may strengthen the belief that reality is impersonal. Or, to put it otherwise, a differing idea of God may serve the same religious function in two religions. Is the goal (God or Reality) then the same in both religions? Perhaps the answer would be that the true goal in both is the same full relationship of the worshiper to Reality, but that the idea of Reality (or God), which is used by each as a means of achieving that relationship, differs from faith to faith. In general, however, the distinction we have made will hold true without serious qualification: religions are one in their common goals, but many in the roads they choose to reach them.

With this in mind we may speak more clearly about our proper course when dealing with the confusing variety of differences in religious thought and practice. Like a traveler in a strange country who has had a landmark pointed out



to him, we must keep ourselves oriented toward the mountain peak whither our journey is tending. We may ask about each little bypath of peculiar custom or belief: how and where does this join on to the main highway route by which this particular religion has chosen to reach its goal?

This will have the advantage of giving us our bearing at most points. If we elect to take an interesting side trip by way of illustration or curiosity, we shall know where we are, and know that we *are* on a side trip. We shall further be able to distinguish the important differences between two religions from the unimportant by relating them both to the main highway or to the goal they both seek. We shall not so much seek to describe the mass of varying detail among differing religions, as to say: be on the lookout for this or that main type of diversity. Note what a religion says and does about *this* concern or relationship. Observe how it answers *that* kind of question. Note *these* internal features of its structure. Then when we shall encounter a strange religion we shall be able to relate it intelligently to our own religious experience, and also to those other faiths of which we may have some knowledge.

✓ To this end there will be three chapters in this section. The first will have to do with the general nature and quality of religious differences. The second will present a longitudinal section of religious differences by sketching the course of  
✓ the historical development of religion into its several main types or levels. The third will concern itself with a cross-sectional view of the significant points on  
✓ which the great religious traditions of our own time disagree. With such an over-all perspective of the terrain of religious diversity, its historical development, and its significant modern forms, we shall be prepared to fill in the full picture with its many rich details in the three subsequent parts of our discussion.

## Chapter VIII

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### THE NATURE AND QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

#### 1. *Are Differences Peculiar to Religion?*

Are religions peculiar in that they differ so extensively among themselves—even though they are all presumably seeking the same goals? Are such differences found nowhere else in human life, proving thereby that religion is incurably odd? Are these differences so extreme in degree that we must assume religion to be intrinsically subjective and therefore untrue—or at least untrustworthy?

As a matter of fact the case is often stated in such a way that an affirmative answer to all these questions is implied. It is often assumed—though without directly saying so—that in every other way or area men agree. It is only or mostly in religion that they quarrel with each other; which—according to this view—proves either that religious people are especially quarrelsome or else that they are talking about nothing factual that can be tested for truth or about which meaningful statements can be made. For if God were a reality, for instance, how could so many people have different and conflicting ideas about Him?

The truth of the above implications may be flatly denied. Even about the same historical event accounts will differ. Let six people observe the same street-corner accident, and, more likely than not, there will be six different versions of it—unless there has been deliberate agreement beforehand to tell the same story. The varying accounts do not therefore disprove that the accident occurred, but rather the contrary—as long as the divergences are not absolutely contradictory. In the latter case a choice between the right or wrong, the true or false, would be necessary.

Let us observe then at the beginning that difference of viewpoint is a very common experience, and by no means limited to the religious sphere of human life. Certainly differences characterize the history of philosophy in every culture.



Hindu philosophy, for example, has its six great systems of thought, each differing radically from the others. In our own culture some of the earliest views expressed in Greek philosophy indicate the possibility that people may have the "same" general kind of experience, but disagree radically about its interpretation. Thus we have always been, and still are, fundamentally divided in philosophy between those on the one hand who see in the dynamic process of change the essential character of reality, and those on the other who stress the great stabilities and uniformities of our world of experience. So also moral theorists have disagreed, and still radically disagree, about what the good life is and what moral goals men ought to seek. Shall it be in terms of some great transcendent, ideal standard that we strive for goodness; or in terms of practical, tangible goods of proven utility in experience? If we turn to the artist, his very name is a synonym for complete individuality of viewpoint. There are schools of artists, to be sure, but they are not held together by any strong ties, and easily break up into new groups. And still further, in terms of politics men are more violently divided today than ever before; political antagonism is perhaps the outstanding feature of contemporary public life, reaching a near-religious pitch of emotional intensity.

Some may say, however: "But you have left science out of the picture. Here is where we have agreement of such a uniform quality that it distinguishes science from all other disciplines, particularly religion, somewhat as fact is distinguishable from fancy." This is at best an overstatement; for even among the most agreed of the lot, namely physical scientists, the agreement is not absolute. There is little more reason for saying "science," in the singular, than for saying "religion," because there are specific sciences rather than one general variety—physics, chemistry, biology, geology, to name only a few, and their many branches. Each one of these is like a workman tunneling into the tremendous mountain of physical fact from a slightly different direction, believing that it is the same mountain his fellow scientist tunnels into, and that they may all finally meet somewhere in its heart. And even among those of the same specific branch of science, not all questions are yet settled—as witness the differing interpretations of the theory of evolution, geological statements about the age of the earth and human life, the truth or falsity of physical relativity, and the corpuscular and wave theories of light transmission. This is not to discount the large and increasing measure of agreement and interaction among them. But it is to suggest that though there are linkage and correlation there is no complete unity; and that some of the existent unity is achieved by observing mainly one type of phenomenon while neglecting others.

Thus it would seem that religion is not the only inheritor of diversity of viewpoint, and that elsewhere such diversity is not taken to prove the non-

existence or unimportance of the subject matter. For religion has its uniformities as well as its diversities—a fact that ought to be given the same credit here as in other areas. But what is evident, whether in science, philosophy, or diversity of religious viewpoint, is that the cosmic reality, of which we are an experiencing and observing part, is so varied in its manifestations that an endless variety likewise appears in our reports concerning it; hence, though there may well be widely different accounts of it, this does not necessarily mean utter confusion among them or lack of essential truth in any.

## 2. *But Why so Fanatical?*

With large-minded generosity we have now allowed to religion the same right to differ in its beliefs and manifestations that is allowed to and practiced by other disciplines. The exceedingly varied nature of the world in which we live and our varied experience of it make such differences inevitable, especially when we reach the areas where we attach values to our opinions, or expect to act upon them.

But another quality, perhaps somewhat peculiar to religions, now makes its appearance: the great intensity, even fanaticism, with which religions cherish their differences from each other, even on points which seem very trivial to the outsider. So marked is this quality that to many people bitterness of dispute has become the hallmark of religion. Even in areas where the subject matter is not supposedly religious, we begin to suspect that a "religious" quality is creeping into one's beliefs when he displays fanatical devotion to any one particular formulation of his views. On every other matter and in every other context compromise seems possible; or if no compromise can be reached, scientists, philosophers, artists, and politicians may find it possible to live amicably together. But in religion—especially in the West—there has been a quality of fighting vigorously right down the line for the rightness, the exclusive rightness, of one's beliefs and practices, to the dotting of the last *i*.

A classic example of such meticulous and fanatical dotting of creedal *i*'s in the history of Christian doctrine has often been cited. The Nicene Council of 325 A.D. set itself to bring theological harmony into the Christian Church by finding a satisfactory formula in which to express the relation of Christ to God. The orthodox party (meaning the party that became orthodox because it prevailed) put forward the Greek term *homoousios*, meaning "of the same substance." (Thus Christ was held to be of the *same* substance as God.) The Arian party, which wished to give Christ something of a created status, would not accept this term. And neither party would accept a compromise term *homoiousios*, meaning "of like substance," proposed by a moderate party. (The creed thus written, by virtue of the extra *i*, would then have said that Christ



was of *like* substance with God.) The Arians, temporarily successful in the Council, disclaimed this moderate party, which was consequently driven over to the orthodox party of Athanasius; thus *homoousios* triumphed in the end. But for a generation the dispute split the Church into three parties, and the Arian "heresy" itself persisted in Europe for another two hundred years.

It is easy, however, to find illustrations closer at hand. Who has not had some experience with two Protestant churches seeking to join forces, either as a local project, or a denominational venture? In the former case neighbors and long-time friends, who belong to the same social circles and do everything else in the community together, find themselves unable to worship together. Whether it is a matter of beliefs, personal taste in ministers, or varying opinions on hymn books and church furnishings, does not really matter; such differences are sufficient to keep the groups apart and are often cherished zealously.

On the denominational level the scenery is littered with discarded plans of union, disbanded or dormant committees for exploratory study of possible mergers, speeches and articles urging unity, and the history of unsuccessful attempts to achieve church union. Difficulties of all sorts arise: clashing theories of the ordination of the ministry; theological differences about the divinity of Christ or the interpretation of the Bible; difference of social or racial backgrounds among denominations; or incompatible systems of church government. Though many significant unions of denominational groups have occurred recently within Protestantism, it may be something of a question still as to whether the forces of union or divergence are gaining in numbers and influence.

Yet what disturbs the observer is not that there should be differences, but the tenacity with which such differences are cherished. It may be repeated that this seems somewhat peculiar to religion. The religious man often seems more concerned to maintain his differences from other religious men than to emphasize his likenesses. This is what we must explain.

Some of this separatism can be explained very simply as conservatism. A person gets used to a particular way of doing things and dislikes to change. This may apply to anything from wearing a favored necktie up to sitting in a favorite pew in church, singing favorite hymns, or dwelling on a favorite idea of God. Much of the attraction of one way of worship over another is simply this at-home feeling that attaches to the familiar pattern; and a great part of religious loyalty is primarily the love of familiar buildings, symbolisms, persons, and patterns of devotion.

Then too the peculiar or distinctive is loved for itself—in religion as elsewhere. It would perhaps be inspiring to think of religion as universally practiced by all men everywhere, and of belonging to a fellowship of faith that girdles the globe; but we need also what William Ernest Hocking has called

the "grit of the particular"—our "particular" church building, our special hymns and scriptures, our chosen creed, and a form of worship best suited to our personal needs.

This factor is intensified sometimes by peculiar religious circumstances. Especially is it true where the religious group becomes closely identified with some natural grouping—be it biological, political, or social. The Jewish faith early became identified with a particular group of people, who were more or less of a racial unit. The dominant interpretation of the faith tied it up closely with the preservation of the group itself; to be religious was to be Jewish, and to be Jewish was to be religious. Thus group pride—and self-consciousness—even group preservation—strengthened religious exclusiveness. Or one recalls Gandhi's reaction to those who would convert him to Christianity. In substance he said: "Hinduism is the faith of my fathers and my people. Why should I change from it to a foreign faith—especially when that faith is the one professed by those who rule India oppressively and illegally?"

This is not the depth of the matter, however. Another more important "depth" factor is that religion calls forth moral idealism and devotion. We have noted in the preceding chapter how morality makes its first appearance in a religious context, and always remains part of the religious concern. And it is beside the point to observe that the moral standards of a past religious age can no longer be accepted by our age. The point is that the moral impulse, whether well- or ill-educated, is stimulated by religion, and that a considerable part of the enthusiasm that is religion's, consists of moral conviction.

Now moral devotion tremendously increases the power of an institution or way of life over its members; this is true even when it is only dimly and rather instinctively felt. Devotion to the group to which one belongs, and a willingness to sacrifice oneself for its welfare—moral qualities in the widest sense of the term—have always strongly moved many men—though they could not always have stated why they were so moved. When moral standards and ethical qualities become clearly distinguished they become even more potent forces in human life. One might think of the tremendous force of the idealism and devotion aroused by such concepts as righteousness, justice, and love. And when these qualities are woven into the fabric of religion—as they usually are, by being attributed to Divine Reality and prescribed for the good life—their force is incalculable.

This moral dimension of religion then helps us understand why such a depth of devotion is aroused by religious faith and institution, and why so much of reforming, world-changing impulse has come out of this area. For while the quantity and quality of this reforming energy depend on the circle of ideas held by a particular religious faith—some religions being almost entirely con-



servative in social matters—religions by and large have produced many of the great social upheavals of historical times. If the Communism of our day be taken as a major exception, seeming to be a nonreligious reformatory movement of tremendous power, it must be answered that it has become religious in function by virtue of opposing itself to all other faiths.

Yet even here we have not reached the full depth of the matter. For the root cause of the fanatical devotion which religion as such arouses in its devotees is not primarily moral, but comes directly from its fundamental orientation to the universe which we have described earlier. Because religion deals with the area of man's deepest concerns and with his attempted relating of himself to the most ultimate reality which he can find, everything attached to this relationship partakes of its seriousness. This basic religious concern with Reality is its vital nerve; whatever touches it touches religion at the core of its being; it is instantly alert to any threat in this area. This is what religion signifies by marking off certain things with the mark of holiness or sacredness. It is saying of such things: "These have to do with the most vital concerns known to man; beware how you handle them!"

✓ Or this might be phrased in terms of salvation. Says religion of its rituals and techniques, its institutions and creeds: these have to do with man's eternal salvation. They are of supremest importance, far more vital to man than anything else you might mention. We cannot afford to jeopardize humanity's ultimate salvation by neglecting, changing, or belittling any part of the process. Religion, and everything connected with it, is precious, just as a man's eternal hope is precious.

✓ The confusing factor in this situation, to the nonreligionist or other-religionist, is how to distinguish the religiously essential or the sacred from the non-essential or nonsacred in a given religion. From the outside it is practically impossible. It depends almost entirely on the context of which a particular rite or belief is a part. For the primitive practicing his magic formulae or ritual dance, one wrong word or gesture may invalidate the whole. The theologians who battled over the inclusion or exclusion of an *i* in a Greek word within a creed, considered the distinction of prime importance, for it had to do with the final evaluation placed on Christ's work and being. Those who today dispute over what it means to ordain a minister or priest—whether it must be done in the apostolic succession (by authority handed down directly from the Twelve through officially ordained transmitters of power, *i.e.*, bishops) or whether by the action of any group of believers gathered together—believe that the whole validity of the Christian ministry is involved.

What sort of judgment can we then bring to bear in cases such as these? Granted that religion attaches importance to its symbols and words because they are related to man's hope of salvation—that is, to his prospects of right re-

lations to the ultimate—is there no way to draw distinctions between the more or the less important? Religious leaders sometimes do draw such distinctions from inside religion. Buddha protested against the scheme of salvation in the Brahmanism of his time—a salvation gained by mechanical ritual and caste status. The poets and preachers of India's middle ages raised an effective protest against the mystical pattern of an intellectual, abstract religion only for the few, and brought it to the masses with their doctrine of devotional faith. Jesus spoke disparagingly of some of the finer distinctions of the Jewish law, urging that justice and mercy were more important than tithing anise, mint, and cummin. And so too the Protestant reformers of 16th century Europe sought—successfully or not—to return to what they conceived to be the simple vital faith of the Church's first days.

But institutional religion is as often unconcerned as it is concerned over its own reform; hence its would-be reformers frequently become alienated from its established patterns. Nor can it escape the same judgments of consistency and worth that we make on other human endeavors. We may allow it a certain amount of leeway in making its own distinctions and setting its own house in order; but in the end the concerns over which religions differ must be differences basic or important to all men and all life—if religion is to retain the respect or reverence of mankind. And the distinctions religions make between the central and the marginal within their own domain must to some extent accord with those same distinctions elsewhere in human life—if religions are to move outsiders to embrace them.

### 3. *Patterns of Tolerance and Intolerance*

Before we leave the consideration of why religions differ from each other there is one more matter of interest. It is the fact that some religious traditions are more tolerant of religious difference than others.

The great major contrast here is between what we call the Western and the Eastern religions. The Western—including Zoroastrianism (now nearly extinct except for a transplanted colony in India), Judaism (in some periods of its history), and Christianity and Islam—rather universally tend to emphasize intolerance. In this general area also belongs the Communistic faith, a bastard product of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Oriental faiths, on the other hand—including Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism—are almost unlimitedly tolerant. Confucianism, as state religion and national ethic, varied in its attitude, being sometimes tolerant, sometimes persecutive; and Shintoism in Japan—in its later stages as an officially cultivated religious nationalism—adopted an intolerant attitude, no doubt somewhat influenced by the West. But on the whole we may say that the West is markedly intolerant, and the East remarkably, even amazingly, tolerant.



✓ A few examples may make this clearer. The West has emphasized creedal statements and the organization of close-knit fellowships or church groups that have sought to make their influence felt within society. Western theology has spoken in terms of absolutes: only one truth; only one way of conceiving that truth; salvation a narrow road; only one true church, and so on. Hence the West excommunicates its heretics, organizes innumerable churches—each of which is the true church—sends its heroes on crusades and holy wars to kill the infidel, exports its saints as missionaries to convert the heathen, and fights long and bloody religious wars within itself. Its total flavor—despite some happy exceptions and a gradual softening of attitude in recent days—is intolerant exclusiveness.

✓ The East, on the contrary, opens its arms to new varieties of faith. In China, Taoism, as a kind of nature mysticism, Confucianism, as a system of social ethics maintaining a state religion, and Buddhism, as a theology and religious discipline, were able, after some preliminary skirmishes, to settle down side by side. It is at least partly true to say that the practical, tolerant Chinese assigned to each a respective niche in the total religious life. Buddhism itself is of several varieties, none of which castigates or attempts to excommunicate the others. And Hinduism is rather a collection of religions than one religion—being agreed only, as someone has said, on veneration of the Vedic Scriptures and love of the cow. It was Ramakrishna, a recent Hindu saint, who claimed to have had successive supernatural visions attesting the “truth” of Christianity, Islam, and two or three branches of his own faith. He finally chose his mother-goddess Kali as the focal point of his devotion, but spoke often of the many ways to truth represented by different religions; and he maintained that the different names used by different religions for God were all equally allowable.

How shall we explain this difference of attitude? It would require far more than a short paragraph or two to do so, since it roots in the whole structure of thought and life in each case; but an important point or two may be made.

✓ Primarily it results from a different religious approach to reality. The East is strongly esthetic and subjective in its approach to the world. The Oriental is not quite sure of the reality of the world about him, as a physically separate item, but treats it as half illusion—perhaps the product of one’s own inner states of mind or feeling. The inner world of the spirit is more real to him than the outer world of the body; the relation of each soul to the great World Soul is most important, while the relations of men to each other in history and society are less real, less important. Hence the East is mystical and contemplative (with perhaps China excepted), flexible in its ways of thinking, because it is not tied to such definite ideas about the physical world. Reality as mental may present itself in a multitude of ways to men; why should one insist that his own is best?

The West, on the contrary, is moralistic and objective. It is quite sure that the world about it is real and important, a stage on which eternally significant action takes place, that history is not an illusion, but the scene of God's activities. God is viewed as a very definite personal individual, with definite rules or ideas about operating the world. His will has been made clearly known—though versions of it somewhat differ—and must be carried out in this world. For Western religions a man has only one existence in which to settle the eternal issues that confront him—not a multitude of rebirths, as the Hindu conceives it. Courses of action are either good or bad; ideas about anything, true or false. Hence the pressures for immediate, convinced, and definite action are tremendous, and along with them goes the pattern of intolerance toward those who differ.

It will not do at this point to make a final judgment on these two viewpoints, of better or worse, good or bad, or more or less religious. The description of religion we have favored here, as a serious or even fanatical concern with ultimates in which different modes of expression seem to be of great importance, is of course influenced by the Western version of religion. And it may be that when we finally come to face the question of evaluating religions, consideration of the differing ways in which religions express that concern will prove to be of considerable importance. Yet the Eastern flexibility of temperament with regard to creedal statements and tolerance of varying religious practices, however unsatisfactory to the Westerner, must not be taken to mean religious indifference. There is—or has been—in the East a depth of religious devotion and permeation of culture by religious values seldom experienced in the West.

It is primarily a variant conception of the nature of ultimate reality that makes the difference. The Oriental does not expect to relate himself to the impersonal force which for him is Reality, basically by means of creedal statements; ultimate reality cannot be so described, he holds, but is to be felt or experienced. Hence creeds are of secondary importance to him. Even where he worships a specific being of personal nature, he hopes to approach him more through devotion and mystical feeling than through thought or action. Where his belief *has* taken definite form—as in the Indian caste system—his intolerance is as marked as ours. And in his detestation of the secular or irreligious way of life he goes far beyond us, though his nonviolent creeds have largely kept him from persecutions or religious wars against those who differ with him.

We shall do well to keep both Eastern and Western attitudes toward religious differences constantly in mind as genuine expressions of a religious spirit, and at a later point inquire as to the final implications of each for our evaluation of religious faiths.



## Chapter IX

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### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

In this our second chapter on religious differences we shall be concerned to describe the way in which existing divergences of belief and practice have arisen in the process of historical development. To use an analogy: we shall here attempt to make a *vertical* section of different levels of religious diversity from the most primitive to the “highest”—whatever we shall decide “highest” to mean. And we shall assume—though with some preliminary qualifications—that these vertical levels also represent a historical process of development; so that our vertical section—vertical in terms of cutting across qualitative levels in religion—will also be a *longitudinal* section in terms of tracing the historical process of religious development from lower to higher forms.

#### I. *Cautions and Precautions*

One prejudice—for it is a prejudice rather than an informed opinion—may be noted at the beginning: namely, that religions do not change. It is true that religions tend to be conservative—often intensely so; many times change of any sort must be forced on them. Denominational names, creeds, and ritual practices are treasured from generation to generation, and with the passing of each generation become still more sacred.

For example, India's many and varied sects of Hindus all revere the four Vedas (their scriptures), which come to them unchanged out of remote antiquity. Protestants wish to “go back” to the Bible—often very literally—for their final guidance. And Roman Catholics love to say that their traditions, doctrines, and the pattern of the celebration of the Mass reach back to the very beginnings of Christian history. Obviously those in authority in religious groups at any given point in religious history are unenthusiastic about major changes within the thought or institution of religion—as are those in authority anywhere. So it is accurate to point out the strongly traditional and conservative

quality of institutional religion, though it may be doubtful whether it is unique in this respect.

Yet this is only one side of the matter. Religions do change and develop as the result of a variety of causes; even within a generation or two some changes are observable in many existent religions throughout the world. Those familiar with Christian theology and church life will be aware of the impact of evolutionary theory on Christian thinking in the latter 19th century, Biblical scholarship in the early 20th, and of the crisis theology of Barth in the last three decades. And if we care to go back farther in its history, words like "Reformation," "Counter-Reformation," and the "Council of Trent" bear witness to the convulsive changes that affected Christendom four hundred years ago. Indeed, if we should go back in Christian history still farther—nineteen centuries and a little more—we should find Christianity to be only a group of Jewish followers of a Jewish teacher, far different in thinking and life from that which later developed, and largely unaware of what they were to become. The same pattern of change, often radical and revolutionary—one of the growth of a new religion from an old and the consequent change of the old by reaction to the new—could be found in nearly every major religious tradition. In fact, it seems unnecessary to belabor the point further. One may say that some religions, such as the primitive, appear to remain relatively unchanged for long periods, and that others, like Islam, seem to be relatively slow to change. But he may go on to say truthfully that both change and permanence are persistent and essential features of religion, just as truly as of any other phase of culture. Religion is not peculiar because of the presence or absence of either element, but in their form and their relation to each other in the religious context.

## 2. *The Causes of Religious Change*

Having recognized the fact of religious change, we may go on to inquire as to its causes. They may roughly be classified as outer and inner—meaning thereby those that originate primarily in forces acting on religion from without its structure and even perhaps in opposition to it, and those that seem to arise from purely religious factors themselves. That the two types cannot always be clearly separated from each other goes almost without saying.

The external causes of religious change are inherent in the fact that religions exist in time and space. Notwithstanding their frequent reference to the supernatural, religions live within cultures which are of this world, and are therefore affected by the same forces that form those cultures into particular patterns. Especially is this true where a religion is not clearly differentiated from the rest of the culture. But even where religions have achieved some distinctive and independent groupings and can rightly be called "ways of life," they are not



exempt from outside influences. Religions must deal with the same general content of experience as other disciplines of thought and action, and will be affected like them by the factors we label as economic, social, political, or historical. Their special interest in the sacred does not insulate them so thoroughly from the remainder of life that its language, social habits, and patterns of thought leave their formulations of sacredness totally untouched.

Many instances could be cited. It is possible to maintain, for example, that climatic and geographical conditions have had some effect upon religious (and other) ideas. Some believe that the experience of finding themselves pocketed in the Indian peninsula with its restricted resources, plus its intense heat, changed the healthy-minded, boisterous optimism of the Aryan invaders, which we find in the early Vedic religion, into the brooding mysticism and extreme pessimism that characterize most of the later Indian religions. Others have suggested that there is something peculiar about the semidesert wastes of the Middle East that produces somewhat automatically a religious frame of mind, and helped create three of the great worldwide religions of today, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Climatic derivation of ideas is undoubtedly an oversimplification, for similar climates by no means always produce similar ideas or responses; yet such influences may not be denied their general effect.

If we turn to political, social, and economic conditions, the influence of outside factors on religion is much more definite. Since 90 percent of the time of many primitives must of necessity be occupied with maintaining mere existence, it is not surprising that their religion should be deeply concerned with fertility, success in war, and procurement of material goods like food and clothing. It would seem to be no accident that the Hebrews who settled in that narrow bridgeway between the great empires of Egypt and Assyria-Babylonia, and were employed by each as pawns in their respective struggles for world dominion, should think of religion in nationalistic terms, and conceive of Jehovah (Yahweh) as one who operated actively in the political scene; or that when early Islam began to unite the Arabs under its banner, long dormant Arab nationalism came to focus, and beneath the banners of the new faith swept triumphantly on its course of holy wars from Spain to India.

Other instances may be given. The Hebrew prophets, moved in part by the plight of the Hebrew peasant, became champions of social justice for the lower classes in the name of Yahweh. The Aryan conquerors of India sanctified the oppression of the conquered people by placing them in the lowest social caste (Shudra) and restricting their religious privileges. There is no doubt that the Roman Catholic Church inherited the prestige of imperial Rome, and finally modeled itself after the medieval feudal social pattern in its own hierarchical structure; or that modern American Protestantism is in many ways a reflection

of the life and thinking of the middle classes, while the small sects have become the refuge of the socially disinherited.

Thus religion has been part and parcel of the world of wars, political strife, geographical exploration, business, class struggle, and all the other varied forces that have affected human life. But it would be a mistake to suggest that it has been only a passive spectator to all this, or at best a mere blank tablet on which any man or party might write its own version of truth. Powerfully affected by the age and culture in which it lived, it has been; but completely dominated or formed by outside forces and ideas, it has *not* been. Religions—particularly in their more advanced forms—have contributed to the social process their own independent ferment of new ideas and actions. In truth, of many of the civilizations of Asia and Europe it can be said that religious ideas have dominated the culture rather than the reverse. They have been the vital cultural center for long generations; so that one may, with a great deal of truth, speak of Europe as Christian, India as Hindu, and the Middle East as Moslem. The basic cultural and political differences of these regions from each other—even today when their religious traditions are perhaps less influential than five centuries ago—can still be traced to religious differences more than to any other one factor.

What we are here trying to say is that besides the external influences that operate on religions to change them, there are the internal factors growing out of the religious viewpoint and organization itself that contribute essentially to religious change. In general the contributions of religions to their own development can be said to grow out of the peculiarities of the religious viewpoint itself. As attempted apprehensions of the supernatural, religions are bound to look on the world of economics, politics, and society differently from any other discipline of thought or from the common viewpoint. Hence the very fact that some men are religious and seek to interpret all their experiences in religious terms will of itself induce change. This inherently different viewpoint has frequently led to a decisive contrast with nonreligious views, and to reactions of various kinds to and from other cultural forces. The result has been a continuous and dynamic interaction between religions and their cultural contexts, which has affected both the culture and the religion, and produced a continuing social ferment. The only partial exception would be in those cases where a religious viewpoint so thoroughly dominates a culture, and becomes so static inwardly, that all change must be forced on it from the outside. Such would be the case with regard to certain periods of Confucian and Islamic cultures, and more generally of much primitivism.

Now the most pronounced and specific means by which the inward creative forces of religion express themselves is through the religious genius. For though



the religious tradition and community may change slowly because of their own internal workings or the gradual evolution of some doctrines, practices, or social factors, the most productive force for change in historic religions has come from the unusual individual within the faith. He may be the man with a new doctrine, a new emphasis on old doctrines, the individual surrounded by an aura of divine power, or a person characterized by an unusual intensity of devotion. Such individuals are variously called seers, prophets, saints, or saviours; and their presence appears to be the cause—or at least the inevitable accompaniment—of progression and change within a religion. We might state it in these words: those religions that allow considerable individual expression—or at least stimulate it—have been the changing and growing ones; those which discourage it have remained static.

In primitivism the community and its tradition swallow up the individual, hence they become culturally and religiously stratified and static; or sometimes the prevailing pattern stifles the variant expression. Thus Ikhnaton's premature attempt to create a monotheism in Egypt foundered on the strength of the polytheistic tradition and priestly opposition. And here also—as in general with the other nationalistic faiths of past days (Greece, Rome, Assyria-Babylonia)—religion was so completely wedded to the political fortunes of the nation that it could not change sufficiently to survive the nation's fall. On the other hand, the great world religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, and to a lesser extent Islam, have been prolific in the production of individual religious leaders and geniuses; and consequently their respective histories represent a series of important changes and developments, often generated from within rather than forced upon them from without. Each was founded by a great teacher or prophet, except Hinduism; and in each case the founder of the faith was an individual who varied significantly from the norm in his interpretation of the older religious tradition: Buddha from Brahmanism, Jesus from Judaism, Moses from both desert and Egyptian religion, Mohammed from Arabian primitivism and the Judeo-Christian tradition. And in nearly all of them a long succession of eminent leaders or interpreters or new heresies has arisen. Consequently a rich variety of interpretation and a profusion of new ideas and practices have resulted, both by contrast with the other faiths and within the variant sects of each faith itself.

### 3. *The Meaning of Religious Development*<sup>1</sup>

✓ Such then is the situation: religions have changed importantly over a period

<sup>1</sup>The author acknowledges indebtedness to Warren Nevius in Chapter III of his *Religion as Experience and Truth* for the following pattern of interpretation and classification of stages of religious development.

of time, due to both outward and inward forces. What does it mean, however, to speak of religious change as "development"? We have been using the word now and again in speaking of "more-developed" as over against "less-developed" or primitive religions. It is now time to inquire into the meaning of this word and see whether it gives us any help in describing the historical changes that have taken place within religions.

The word "development" is a treacherous one to apply to change, for when we use it we often imply many unspoken meanings. Usually we suggest movement in a definite and continued direction from one stage or level to another; and often we unwittingly include within the use of the term an unacknowledged judgment about the worth of the movement so described. Thus evolution in the biological sphere is looked upon as generally a progressive "development" from the simpler or lower to the more complex or higher forms of life—though some dead ends and retrogressions must be allowed for. Interestingly enough, we often covertly assume that the complex is of course better or higher than the simple—note the use of the word "higher"—and that development means progress. Can this upward and onward conception of development be applied to religion?

It can be meaningfully applied if we are careful to observe some precautions. As was emphasized in the introduction to the discussion of primitive beginnings, we must here reaffirm that religions do not pursue one uniform course of development from the simple to the complex; this represents an unwarrantedly simple application of the evolutionary concept to religion. The constant interplay of unpredictable outer forces with the inner vitality and genius of each religion makes impossible such a simple and direct application of the concept. What must *not* be implied is that all religions have passed or must pass along a given route from a specified kind of beginning to a specified kind of ending. What *can* be meant by the use of the concept of development in the field of religion, is that there is a discernible direction of change which many religions have followed; that there has been in a significant number of cases a gradual rise from that simplicity of idea, absence of a sacred literature, and lack of an explicit organizational structure of religion, which are characteristic of primitivism, to the achievement of all these features at a later period in a given religion's history. This has happened often enough to warrant its designation as "development."

What then of the use of the word "development" in the sense of its progress toward "better" stages? Is it allowable to say either "higher" or "better" with reference to religions? Our contemporary world has great difficulty here, and is inclined to deny the significance of such adjectives; it would be perfectly objective in all its judgments, and avoid making any valuations concerning variant



religions. After all, does not each one appear to satisfy its own devotees? How can an opinion about another's religion mean any more than an outsider's opinion about the suitability of another's dress or food or his taste in music? Yet frequently (and inconsistently) enough, in the next breath all religion may be brushed aside as irrelevant because it does not conform with contemporary ideas about scientific truth, biological or psychological health concepts, or standards of moral goodness. There is that which can be compared with religions, apparently, though they themselves cannot be compared with each other.

Though the final question about the possibility of comparing one religion with another must be saved till the very end of this volume, here we may say that we must accept, at least to some extent, the *possibility* of a judgment about the worth or value of religions, if we are to think about them at all. It is surely as meaningful to describe a religion as more or less developed or higher than another, as it is thus to describe a culture or civilization. The very reason for the decline of religion in many a culture is precisely because it has not developed *pari passu* along with that culture, but remained on a more primitive or simple level. We shall be doing violence to no standard of objectivity or fairness if, for example, we point out that the idea of God as a universal intelligence and moral force governing the world, would seem to be "higher" or "more developed" than the idea of divinity that is found in fetishism or magic.

On such a basis, then, we may distinguish the following ways in which a religion may be said to "develop" from the cruder to the more advanced, or from a lower to a higher form. First, when a religion rises above a crude materialism to a more "spiritual" form of expression, it may be said to progress. Thus primitive religions often worship animals, major in cruel and bloody sacrifices (both human and animal), exploit the sexual drive in fertility rites, and believe that alcoholic and drug intoxication or a diseased mental condition signifies possession by divine power. Divinity, for this level of thinking, is a very materialistic kind of power, and relationships to it can be expressed only in the crudest terms. Certain it is that such religious expressions, however they seem fitted to one stage of culture, are often looked upon with abhorrence by those from other more developed stages—even by those who would deny our right to make value judgments in this area.

A second line of advance, related to the above as spirit is to body or intention to act, is that taken when religion envisions other than crassly material goods. To the primitive, "good" or "goodness" is found in things—clothing, food, shelter, children; to have more of these is to have more goodness. Mana, spirits, powers, or gods are entreated to this end and to scarcely any other; it could not well be otherwise. Yet when techniques have advanced so as to liberate men ever so slightly from the crushing burden of physical toil, or when some in-

novator has lighted some new flame of interest in the leisured artifact or the performance of a deed not strictly necessary for survival, men begin to think of goodness as a quality rather than a quantity. If and when religion shares in this benefit, it begins to conceive of worship as a good in itself, to work lovingly on its forms for their intrinsic beauty—not just their practical effectiveness—and to consider fellowship with the divine as of worth in itself. This too can be called an advance.

An intellectual category may be suggested as typifying a third line of advance: more universalized religious concepts. This takes place in religions in many different forms. Animism, for example, with its envisioning of a realm of being other than the sheerly physical, is such an advance, however crude it may seem to us. Here is the beginning of the division of the ideal from the actual, so significant for later religious development. Or, if we wish to consider the use of ritual, we may find another example. Thus religions have frequently used light as symbolic of the divine; at some levels the fire, the lightning, and the sun have been worshiped as divine in themselves. But these symbols and their accompanying rituals were often spiritualized, as in the case of the Assyrian sun-god Shamash, who was gradually transformed from a sun-god, pure and simple, into the patron of justice and the illuminator of the human spirit.

The area of religion's conception of the supernatural offers what is perhaps the best general illustration of intellectual advance. At the lower levels of religion the supernatural is often thought of as being attached to a specific physical body or to be found only in a given place. Later—as with polytheism in some forms—gods are conceived as having some organization among themselves whereby each god will rule over a certain phase of nature. And finally, when we come to monotheism's conception of God as one, universal in power, and of infinite spiritual capacities, we must say that this is a "higher" conception of divinity than the primitive or polytheistic.

A fourth area of advance is in the moral sphere. And even here, with all of the variations to be found in ethical standard among human beings and the endless disputes as to whether there is truly any objective good or bad, we can perhaps speak correctly of "development." This is to be found especially in the way in which moral and religious goods and ideas come to be mingled. As religions progress from the primitive upward, it is no longer enough to pronounce the right ritual word, but the worshiper's "heart" (*i.e.*, his intentions and motives) must be in the right condition. He is called upon to be sincere in his worship, just in his living, and generous in his deeds to gods and men. The way in which the Hebrew prophets moralized the conception of God and the religious life, from the 8th century B.C. onward, has often been remarked. Jehovah desired not merely sacrifices of sheep and oxen and ritual festivities—



indeed, did He desire them at all?—but kindness, justice, truthfulness, and mercy in daily life. Whether we agree or not that the moral standards that come to be emphasized in the religious sphere shall be ours, it would be a very hardy soul who would maintain that such moralization of religion is not actually an advance.

Finally, we may note a feature in religious development that, as far as religious means or instrumentalities are concerned, is of basic importance: the increase of the recognized worth of the individual. It is no doubt true that individualism may become overdeveloped in religion as elsewhere, so that the salvation of an individual's soul becomes his supreme purpose to the exclusion of all other goals. But it is also true that religions develop precisely in proportion as the individual is enabled to make his religious contribution felt. Only then can the stranglehold of tribal custom or age-long tradition be broken; only then can the religious genius or leader—of whom we have spoken earlier—arise to write his significantly new chapter in religious history. It is through this religiously liberated individual that the advance from the material to the spiritual, from the narrow to the universalized conception of God, from the amoral to the moral, takes place. A religion advances as it is able effectively to release personal energies and invigorate the individuals within its group.

#### 4. *Stages of Religious Development*

Having defined what we mean generally by development in the religious realm, we shall go on to note the stages in which such development manifests itself concretely. It must be emphasized again that these stages are not those through which all highly developed religions have passed or must inevitably pass in the process of development. But some important religions *have* passed through them—which makes this a partly historical account of development. And in the case of a static fixation of any one religion at one of these stages, or where one has developed only from a relatively higher initial stage, or may even be degenerating from past vigor and elevation, we can at least see that there are actually distinct levels at which religion manifests itself.

##### a. *Primitive Religion*

Primitive religion may be considered the first or lowest stage. We have already noted in our discussion of religious origins that we may not say of any one form of primitive religion we can now observe, that it is the one and only original religious form; but we may presume that the first religious life of man, as an integral part of his culture and life in general, was of this same undeveloped quality.

What do we mean then by the word "primitive"? We mean either that

which stands near the beginning of a historical development or represents the first steps in a progression upward—as when we speak of the early stages of complex societies or the first one-celled forms of life; or else we may mean that that is rudimentary or simple in nature, such as some of the first forms of that life that elsewhere has progressed to much more complex structures, though these forms themselves will progress no further. Thus some forms of biological life will remain at this simple rudimentary level permanently—yeast cells for example. And comparably in the social realm it may be that the Australian aborigines will remain culturally primitive for an indefinite period of time. Obviously we sometimes include both of these meanings in our use of the word, indicating by “primitive” both a historically initial state and a qualitative simplicity.

Primitive religion then is simple and crude religion—judged to be simple and crude by comparison with other religious forms that have progressed through this stage to more complex and refined stages, or in contrast to still others that never took this simple form but began at a higher level. Thus to call a religion “primitive” is not necessarily to look down our noses in disdainful superiority at it, but only to recognize the fact of its simpler patterns of thought as compared to these others.

Primitive religion in this sense is usually found as an integral part of a likewise primitive civilization or culture, such as we find currently in many parts of Africa, Australia, Indonesia, Micronesia, and parts of the Asian mainland. Here the social organization is relatively simple, consisting as a rule of the smaller units of clan or tribe. Nations, in the modern sense of organized governments and unified territories of wider scope, do not exist. So also the culture is of the simplest. Usually there is no written language, hence no literature or tradition, beyond what can be handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth or by ancestral usage. The economic structure is also often of the simplest, usually an agricultural or hunting-fishing pattern. And the religion which forms an important part of this culture is likewise simple and relatively crude. Indeed, we have already noted something of its vocabulary and usages; it is the religion of mana, taboo, totem, and fetish; it uses the whole apparatus of sacrifice—vegetable, animal, and sometimes human; it expresses itself in semimagical rituals of charm, incantation, spell, and the sacred dance; its “clergy” are the shaman and the witch doctor, or perhaps the head of the family or clan acting as ritual functionary.

Perhaps the greatest advance made at this stage of religion is that represented by animism, which somewhat leavens this crude primitive materialism with the beginnings of a conception of the spiritual. Though a belief in spirits, somehow separate from material substances, is not necessarily religious in itself, it does



furnish the raw material for the later religious contrasts of spiritual and material, other-worldly and this-worldly, eternal and temporal, and the like. The following summary of the religious value of animism states the case well:

What animism has contributed to man's religious conceptions must not be minimized. It has given us the notion of the soul. We may part company with animism on a thousand points, but not on this. That man is more than body, that he is an immortal spirit; that there is in the universe a realm of reality that transcends time and space, that can neither be seen nor touched nor handled and yet is most eternally real; this contribution animism has made, and it can never be taken from us.<sup>2</sup>

We should note, however, that primitive religion is at the bottom of the heap in every one of the ways by which we defined progress in religion. Its expressions are crudely materialistic, consisting of a multitude of physical rites and similar manifestations of the sacred. It also strives almost exclusively for material possessions and physical power over life. Its concepts of the divine are severely limited; they are particularized by being attached to places and objects. Indeed, primitive religion could be called primarily a *place-thing* religion, which deals with the supernatural as a force to be found in groves, fountains, rocks, animals, and various manufactured objects. Nor can it be said to have any great moral insight. Its taboos and tribal regulations of conduct toward the sacred are at their best only precursors of the full ethical distinction between right and wrong—not that distinction itself. And, finally, the individual is practically a nonentity in the primitive community, both religiously and socially, swallowed up in the mass of his society, and suffocated intellectually by its traditions.

#### b. *National Religion*

The close relationship of religious to social development—even its dependence upon it at some points—is evidenced by this our second stage of religion, the national stage; for though “nation” is a political or social term rather than a religious one, we are here designating by its use a stage of religious development.

We need not here go fully into the difficult problem of defining a “nation.” No one definition of “nation” in terms of uniformity of race, culture, language, or political control is entirely satisfactory, nor do all these uniformities together constitute an adequate definition; there are exceptions to all these standards of nationhood. We may say very generally that a nation is a sizable group of people who achieve for a considerable period a measure of unified political control, some cultural uniformity, and are probably of one predominant racial strain

<sup>2</sup> Nevius, *Religion as Experience and Truth*, pp. 79–80.

(or strains) and language group. Thus broadly stated, the definition might include such diverse nations as imperial Rome, ancient Greece, Switzerland, India, China, and France. Especially in connection with national religion do we mean those groups that achieve something of an inner sense of their unity as peoples and cultures.

Now the relation of religion to national groupings is a very interesting one, which we may only sketch in passing (we shall discuss it more fully in Part II, "Religion as Social Pattern"). But we may observe here that the nation as a unit stimulated a considerable loyalty on behalf of its members—very much like a religious loyalty in fact. Someone in our own time, indeed, has called modern nationalism man's "other" religion, which often rather successfully opposes or replaces the ethics and teachings of the universal religion he professes, and generates a similar emotional response. Certainly it is true that religion has often woven itself about national unities; or, conversely, national unity has often been achieved in religious terms. Thus—to mention only a few of the outstanding examples—Egypt, Assyria-Babylonia, Greece, Rome, and Israel signify historic political unities as well as specific religious groups and structures. And modern Japan, with its nationalistic Shintoism, is a reminder that such religions are not altogether a matter of the past. In a word, religion has often flowered in terms of a national culture, and worked hand in hand with its political organization.

What then do we mean by a "national" religion? Not only or exactly that it is the predominant faith of a national group—though that is usually included. We might say that Christianity is the national religion of America, but it is not *a* national religion. Do we mean a state church? This too may be meant; yet even the Established Church of England does not make Anglican Christianity a national religion. It is, in fact, a rather loose term that implies both a predominance of this faith within the nation, and usually the nation's official sanction and enforcement, but more importantly indicates a special relation of the national group to gods or God. Jehovah was the God of Israel, and Israel was His chosen people. The Israelitish (Hebrew) way of life was thus also a religious way of life. The state cult of Rome consisted in honoring the gods with whom that state had made solemn compacts in the person of its officials. And in Egypt all service of the sovereign was in a real sense a religious service, since the throne of the pharaoh was established when the heavens were made, and the office itself was the earthly manifestation of Maat, the goddess of justice and truth.

Two or three characteristics of this period of religious development are to be noted. Usually—but not always—it is *polytheistic* (Israel would be an exception). Especially is this true if the national group has resulted from the combining of several smaller tribal groups; these groups pool their gods, so to speak,



for the good of the larger community. Or it may be that sometimes a common cultural background has produced different local manifestations of the same common god, as with the various Apollo's among the Greeks; or that certain of the like gods tend to strengthen each other, as in the Roman adaptation of Greek deities.

✓ Still further, this polytheism is usually an *ordered* one. We may call its structure hierarchical—that is, an ascending-descending social pyramid among the gods, with one or a very few supreme deities at the top level, and then on down in increasing numbers to the lesser and almost anonymous crowd of mere spirits. This results partly from the analogy of the expanding social organization of the state or nation, in which the ruler or king stands on the social and political summit above his ordered cohorts of servitors. Sometimes it is because the political conqueror imposes his deities on the conquered as superior to theirs. And, again, it is witness to the fact that man's mental life is expanding; he begins to think about all departments of his life in more ordered terms. Surely there must be system and order in the natural and religious worlds as well as in the political! Hence he assigns specific functions of the control of wind, sun, sea, earth, or departments of human concern, to particular gods, under the general supervision of the greatest ones.

Hand in hand with this—in the nature of an extension of animism—there is a tendency at this stage to *personalize* and *moralize* the religious life. Here we have moved somewhat beyond the vague, impersonal, almost materialistic conception of mana, or anonymous spirits, to the somewhat more personal gods of specific characteristics and definite powers: Ra in Egypt was a sun-god, pictured with the sun disk above his head; Athene of the Greeks was a gray-eyed warrior goddess, often clad in armor; Indra, god of the Hindus, was a bold warrior, and a great drinker of the sacred beverage *soma*; Ahura Mazda of Zoroastrianism was a god of light and moral goodness; Jove, among the Romans, hurled his thunderbolt from above the clouds; and Jehovah of the Hebrews was a jealous god, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon their children unto the third and fourth generations.

It is true that many of the gods seem to be little more than personalized nature forces; yet the fact that they are thought of as personal to any degree at all is significant in more ways than one. They must thus assume something of moral character, so that such adjectives as "just," "good," "righteous," "noble," "merciful," "loving," and the like, may be applied to them. Sometimes this process is not entirely successful—as with the Greeks, whose gods remained rather immoral; in this case the moralizing of religion was mainly accomplished by critical philosophers. But usually the highest moral insight of the group is given divine status and authority in the codes of the dominant religion, as

when Moses propounded the Ten Commandments under the form of Jehovah's explicit instructions to his people, and Amos declared that God demanded justice and righteousness rather than animal sacrifice. And so, too, the step that pretty clearly differentiates religion from magic is often taken at this point: man begins to think of his gods as those with whom he may have fellowship for its own sake, not merely that they may be persuaded to serve his physical needs.

In this same period of national religion there is usually the extensive development of *cultus* and *myth*. Cultus, or the whole body of religious ritual, is in the national period a natural accompaniment of the expansion of religion; for new and greater gods demand greater and different duties. Temples or shrines appear in large numbers and on a more splendid scale; ritual is extensively elaborated; special functionaries (priests) are appointed to serve in the temples and perform their rituals. In the Old Testament this development can be observed in the progress from the simple animal sacrifices of the desert years to the elaborate and varied feast-sacrifices of Solomon's era; from the tent in which the ark was sheltered, to a cedar house at Shiloh, to the gold-decorated temple at Jerusalem; from Samuel, the seer, offering the sacrifice singlehandedly, to a priesthood of hundreds; from ten short commandments to a considerable body of complex religious-social law. By a kind of natural momentum religions seem to expand themselves in all directions at this stage of marked social and political vigor.

So also in this era of national development does the distinctive religious myth frequently make its appearance. The meaning of myth and the whole problem of religious language will be discussed later (Chapter XXIV); but here we mean by myth the first explicit formulation of religious thought about the world and human life which makes its appearance in accounts of the origin of the world, the beginnings of the human race, the destiny of man, and his relation to the gods. Such accounts have found their way into the scriptures of many faiths: Babylonian accounts of creation and the flood, paralleled by the Hebrew Genesis; the Vedic hymns of Hinduism; the Homeric poems of Greece; and the Osiris stories of Egypt. In such accounts the intellectual concern of religion is expanding itself speculatively beyond the narrow limits of primitivism and tribal life. Or perhaps it would be better to say that religion is here intuitively trying, in new and more comprehensive ways, to respond to the forces that environ man; that it is seeking to rationalize, in terms of its widening horizons, the content of the ritual usages that have come down to it from the past.

Thus it can be seen that national religion represents a genuine advance in development. The spiritual and moral factors are now to some extent given a conscious and deliberate formulation. Modes of religious expression expand be-



yond the crude primitive patterns. And this is done not so much by an abandonment of old forms—for sacrifice is still carried at this level—but by their refinement and elaboration, by the enrichment and subtilization of their symbolism. Wider and more comprehensive terms are introduced into religious thought; and the individual has many more opportunities and facilities for the expression of his genius in novel literary and artistic creations.

Yet the limitations are equally obvious. God or gods rule over a particular territory or portion of heaven and earth—not the whole of them. Exclusiveness has been enlarged to more inclusive proportions, but it is still exclusiveness; indeed the religious concern is very great, or at least greater than before, for this or that particular group. He is *our* God—Roman, Greek, Hebrew, Egyptian—and not yours, whoever else you are. Hence ethical duties are primarily duties of one member of the faith toward another, not universal ones. The caste duties of Hinduism are inapplicable outside of India, for example, or very difficult to adapt to foreigners even within India; the Deuteronomic code of lovingkindness was pretty closely confined to the Hebrew community, or at most only to the stranger *within* Israel. And religion in its nationalistic form is shackled irrevocably to national fortunes and ambitions; it may be used to justify national aggression, and has been nourished for purely political purposes. And when the nation dies, almost without exception its religion dies with it; so it was with Egypt, Rome, and Greece. Israel proved otherwise only because her religion had in it the elements of universalism.

### c. *Universal Religion*

National religions can never be universal, because they are nationalistic. We might possibly conceive of a sort of *quantitative* universalism if one national group conquered the whole world and made every human being take up its religious practices. But this has not yet occurred; and if it did perhaps we could no longer call it a national religion. For, as we have seen, national religion is exclusive by nature. Roman religion was primarily for Romans; the allegiance of others to the Roman gods was not craved by the Romans—and presumably not by the Roman gods either. True, the conquered peoples might perchance offer sacrifices in the temples of the Roman gods, or at least pay tribute to the deified emperor's statue; but as long as they did not revolt against the empire or refuse to pay tribute, the Romans were not greatly concerned about their subjects' religious beliefs. In short, national religion belongs to a given nation, is that nation's distinctive cultural expression, and tends to separate any nation the more definitely from other nations the more carefully it is practiced.

A universal religion, on the other hand, believes that it is fitted for acceptance by the whole world. Its universality is not quantitative but qualitative—though

it may hope to achieve the former kind as well; the point is that it does not consider itself confined to any one group just because it originated there. It believes that its truths and moral standards are universal because they illuminate the total meaning of life for all men. Such faiths Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity consider themselves to be. The Sikhs of India and the Zoroastrians of Persia once considered themselves such, but by now have largely settled down into small, tightly enclosed sectarian groups. Hinduism is not specifically nationalistic in doctrine, and some Hindu sects have even sought to evangelize the world, in a mild sort of way; but in general the practice of Hinduism in all of its many forms implies a specific caste structure to be found only in India, without which it is relatively meaningless; and its few missionary efforts have been of small consequence. Judaism must be considered as a rather special case, almost unique among religions, in that it speaks of one universal God whose justice and ethical demands are laid on all men alike, but which, as religious faith, is yet closely tied to an intensely strong sense of peoplehood in its actual structure and practice.

How is it, then, that in some instances we have come from national religion over across to universal religion? Can we trace here a regular evolutionary pattern, in which there is progression from many gods to one, from the differing ideas of differing peoples, each a "chosen" people, to one of a common humanity beloved of God, and from variant moral customs to one universal moral law? Some of this neatly logical evolutionary process may be observable, but it by no means describes the whole of the actual historical process; there are other and more complex factors also involved. With regard to the important religious concept of the supernatural, for example, there has been at least one case in which a form somewhere between polytheism and monotheism, but actually neither one nor the other, has appeared. Among the early Hebrews it would seem that though Jehovah was definitely the only god they intended to worship (when they were orthodox), they believed in the existence of other gods. Some writers would say that the stage of absolute monotheism—i.e., the flat statement that there is only one God in existence and it is He that we worship—came late in Hebrew history, not before the 6th century B.C. This stage of exclusive loyalty to one god among many is often called *henotheism*, or "practical monotheism."

Whether this represents a genuinely transitional stage from polytheism to monotheism is, however, questionable; it may well be that the Hebrews were never really polytheistic. The quality of their faith even at the earliest stage seems to have been essentially different from that of modern India, for instance, where the worshipers of Shiva live tolerantly side by side with the devotees of Krishna, though each group loyally devotes itself to its own deity. Whatever



the case, we can allow only limited credit in this monotheistic development to the natural or "inevitable" expansion of the more comprehensive ideas that had made their appearance in national religion. For though an expansion of national political power might seem of itself to be suggestive of a universal God, as a matter of fact such expansion tends to confirm the nationalistic quality of religious conceptions with their inherent limitations; the gods of the expanding Roman empire were still Roman, though the empire was "worldwide"; and in the absence of a world-state, nationalism lacks a significant political model for the universalizing of its ideas. Indeed, the first exponent of monotheism (Judaism) was a miniscule political power that achieved its final statement of monotheism (Isaiah xl-xlvi) at the lowest ebb of its political power, *i.e.*, while in exile.

✓ More properly we may say that the emergence of the idea of universalism in a religion depends primarily on two other factors: the nature of religious idea and the quality of religious leadership that actually appear in a given religious context. Obviously these two elements are not independent of each other; for religious leaders are formulators of religious ideas, and the power of the idea often makes its exponent a religious leader. Nor can the appearance of such factors be predicted or explained. Why did Buddhism turn into a universalistic religion and Hinduism not? Primarily because Buddha conceived his philosophy of salvation as having little to do with caste, but as depending essentially on the inward spiritual discipline of the person himself; and secondarily because his later followers portrayed his teaching as a message of universal compassion. Why did Christianity develop from a small sect within the Jewish nation into a world-evangelizing church? Because Jesus emphasized many of the implicitly universal ideas within Judaism, and Paul completed the severance of the group from the nationalist Jewish community by offering his gospel to the Gentiles.

✕ It is true that historical conditions—the environment that a developing religion finds to work in, the quality and number of its religious competitors, cultural and political conditions—play their role here. The worldwide career of Christianity was materially forwarded by the prevalence of the Greek language, coupled with the presence of good Roman roads and firm political control in the Mediterranean area. And no doubt the early military successes of Islam seven centuries later considerably expanded the horizons of that faith. Yet none of these factors explains by itself why these two faiths consider themselves to be universal and others do not. For anterior to the fact of their wide geographical spread—indeed in large part accounting for that spreading influence—is the initial conviction on the part of their adherents of the universality of these faiths.

If we are to characterize universal religions in general, we may say that they are predominantly monotheistic. This is of course the logic of their nature; for how could a universal religion serve *several* gods without some confusion of thought and practice? Even though this might be conceivable, it is not likely or actual. The logic of the situation seems to be that a faith conceived to be fitted for acceptance by all mankind is inevitably constructed in terms of exclusive loyalty to one God, or at least one basic Reality, and conversely that only a monotheism of some sort provides the energy for the aggressive spread of a faith. Otherwise the strange gods of other peoples might simply be added to the list of old ones, and not displaced by them, as in the truly universal faiths. Buddhism may seem to be a partial exception to this, because in its early form it was atheistic or agnostic. But in the form in which it spread through the world, Buddha himself was regarded as a god and his ideas as universally practicable. And if it be brought to mind that there are many *bodhisattvas* (incarnations of Buddha or near-Buddhas) in Buddhist countries, it must be noted that there is only one Buddha-substance in all of them, and only one of them incarnates the Buddha in any one age. In neither case are the essential unity and universality of the conception of supreme reality compromised.

It can also be pointed out that religion reaches its fullest ethical and intellectual development in its universalistic forms. Its concepts of the world, world history, and human destiny, are expanded to include the total span and meaning of each of these in some sort of unified scheme or world philosophy. Thus is the way prepared and the proper climate offered for the growth of scientific and philosophical systems, even though organized religions might oppose them at specific points and with regard to particular doctrines. So also is the way prepared for the conception of absolute ethical standards, which would hold everywhere for every society. And still further, it might be pointed out that in its universal form religion attains its fullest stature as religion; it gains the fullest sense of fellowship with the divine that religion is able to achieve—inward personal communion, and the hope of oneness with God. All the qualities of inward prayer, individual personal devotion, dedication of oneself to a standard of personal integrity far beyond that demanded by society, and saintliness itself, become possible in fullest measure to universal religion.

If we ask for an explanation of such developments, as far as one can be given it is that individualization and universalization go hand in hand. When the individual may be related directly to the Determiner of his destiny as an individual, and sustain personal relations to Him, then religion may become fully personal and universal. The individual is religiously somewhat independent of outward cultus; his relation to God is that of an individual of worth, a son, and not merely one member of a people related to God; hence for the first time in



its development religion can logically make its appeal to each man, whatever his racial or national group, to relate himself directly to God. By dealing with the individual as such, religion thus cuts across all lines of group exclusiveness.

And, finally, the inexorable logic of a universal religion is missionary activity. If a religion is fitted for all men, then all men ought to know about it; if religion is a summons to any man whomsoever, then every man ought to hear that summons. For those who take this viewpoint, human likenesses become greater than human differences, since all men may be united in the service of one God according to one pattern of life. And indeed this is precisely what has happened: the universal religions have been those that have sought to make their universal quality a universal quantity as well, by pushing their missionary efforts to the ends of the earth. In our last chapter we shall consider on what grounds we may make a decision among several religions, each of which claims to be universally true and valid.

## Chapter X

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### RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES: A CROSS-SECTION AND PREVIEW

We have observed the peculiar intensity with which religious persons differ from each other, and have suggested reasons for such intensity of disagreement; and we further observed how some of these differences came into being in the course of the historical development of religions, in the longitudinal or vertical-sectional view of the previous chapter. In this chapter we shall take a *cross-sectional* view of religious differences, by asking at what important points contemporary religions of maturity and developed character differ from each other.

Obviously some of the same diversities dealt with before will come up again for examination, but in another context. In the previous chapter we asked: are there differing levels of religious life and thought that correspond to respective cultural levels; and do they mark different stages of the actual historical development of religion? Here we are asking, by contrast: what are the truly important areas of disagreement among the major living religions? and how shall we understand or interpret the meaning of these differences of thought and practice that so fundamentally divide men into diverse religious camps? This chapter then will be a preview of the materials with which we are to deal in the remainder of the volume—a selection of the fields we are later to explore in detail.

At the risk of unnecessary repetition of a previous caution, let us note again that such a comparison cannot be made detail by detail; there are some kinds of religious differences that are relatively insignificant. For instance, one might contrast the different ways in which Moslem, Jew, and Christian pray in their public services. The Moslem prays five times daily, turned toward Mecca. He first purifies himself by washing his hands and forehead (or its equivalent, as circumstances permit), and then repeatedly bows from a kneeling position (forehead touching the ground) while saying certain stated prayers. The Jew



prays while standing, and, even if a man, keeps his hat or special skullcap on his head. In public worship he may pray aloud, but not in strict unison with his fellow worshiper. The Christian man uncovers his head during prayer, often prays (or listens) silently while a leader prays, or sometimes responds antiphonally; and adherents of many communions kneel during prayer.

Now these are interesting details of difference; but what do they tell us of the truly significant divergences among these faiths? To be sure, there may be some tell-tale signs even here of more significant differences: thus the Moslem prostration in prayer undoubtedly reflects the quality of submission to Allah so strongly emphasized in Islam; the erect Hebrew posture may reflect something of the consciousness of being a chosen people who speak with their God face to face; and the Christian posture of kneeling with clasped or folded hands and downcast eyes perhaps indicates the quality of adoration that has been so evident throughout Christian history. But if so, such differences are significant only when understood in other and deeper connections than their mere surface contrast with each other.

Therefore our efforts in this chapter will not be turned toward a full-length examination of the detailed differences among religions, but toward the choice of major areas in which the divergence of religious patterns of thought and action are of the most fundamental significance, and which offer the greatest opportunity for the most meaningful comparison and the fullest understanding. We shall here select those contexts in which it seems most fruitful to examine further the great religions of our world (past and present), and to ask them leading questions about their true character. The remainder of the discussion will then be devoted to an examination along the lines here laid down.

### 1. *How Shall Men Live Together?*

We have earlier indicated in the chapter on the religious fulfillment of human need that a very important element of such fulfillment is its social form: the satisfaction of man's desire for companionship with his own kind, and the achievement of meaningful communication with them. Gregariousness is of course not unique with man, because a herd- or group-instinct likewise characterizes most animals to some extent or in some form. Yet it is man's association with his fellows that has enabled him to rise above his animal status and achieve a language and a culture, and to create the whole complex structure of organized human thought and life. Therefore—as anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists have been telling us with increasing forcefulness—the social patterns into which individuals are born and in which they mature are of basic importance to the understanding of human life, whether individual or group.

It is not strange that a pervasive concern like that of religion should be

deeply involved with man's societal life, or strongly affect the groups that characterize society and in turn be affected by them; indeed, from the very beginning religion is a social phenomenon. In fact, on the primitive level one might say that religion is almost entirely societal, that man is religious only as a member of a group, and not on his own or privately. There is little if any interior dimension to religion at this stage. It is largely a matter of public rituals and group exercises; it ministers to the individual desire for significance and fulfillment primarily by enhancing the significance of the group life and by enriching the forms of group expression.

Now it is true that religion develops its higher forms, as we have seen, only by increasing the degree of the private and personal quality in faith and practice. Only when religions become highly individualized, so that each believer becomes a personal soul in his own right, do they achieve universality and full religious stature. But it is also true that religions can never be completely *un*-socialized, no matter how extreme the manifestation of religious individuality may be. The hermit may seem completely antisocial, or the monk or nun only very narrowly sociable. Yet it must be remembered that the very religious compulsion that drives such lonely ones forth from among their fellows originates in some religious community and tradition. Simeon Stylites, who built himself a pillar, layer by layer, and lived atop it for years, still considered himself a *Christian* recluse, and perforce accepted the help of fellow believers to maintain himself in isolation. And monastic religion not only looks to the scriptures of some tradition or other—Moslem, Christian, Buddhist—for its warrant, but seeks to find an even more perfect communal life in its small group than it could find in the world. Indeed, one might say that monastics are driven from the world into solitude because they find the ordinary world too lonely and unsociable.

Thus at all levels and in all its forms religion seeks to fit into an existent group life of some sort, or to create its own distinctive groups. We might with equal truth describe the development of religions from their lower to their higher forms, either as the progressive liberation of the individual from group domination, or as the progressive refinement and fulfillment of their group life. As we shall observe in the part of our discussion dealing with social patterns, religions may be said to reach their fullest stature when they are able to form their own distinctive and separate social groups, apart from all other natural religious groupings like family, clan, or nation, with whose group life they have often been identified.

Nor is the importance of religious group life exhausted by describing its purely religious significance. For the kind of social life that is nourished by a religion, the social values it emphasizes and to which it contributes, and the



type of group life it achieves, are of basic importance to the total human community. As a matter of historical fact, religious faiths have been largely formative of many if not most of the world's great societies. In particular have the societies of the Orient (possibly excepting China), of the Middle East, of medieval Europe, and of Latin American countries been impregnated with the values, moral standards, and beliefs of religious faiths. Thus, when we compare or evaluate these civilizations we are immediately involved in the evaluation of their religious traditions; and, conversely, when we evaluate a religion, or even thoroughly describe it, we must also consider its quality as a social pattern.

What, then, is the kind of question we should ask about a specific religion in this context? These two types of question would seem to be vital: (1) What is the relation of the individual believer to the religious group of which he is a part? Do his religious tradition and fellowship have a concern for the individual person as such, or do they discount the person in favor of the organization? What measure of authority does the group seek to exert over the individual? Is it able to balance, in its life and ritual, the human need for both individuality of expression and community participation? (2) What is the relationship this group proposes to achieve with other groups within the larger society? What degree of authority or control does it seek to gain over the total society? What are its ideals and goals for itself as a group; what kind of group life does it seek to achieve? When we can answer such questions about any religion, we shall be able to compare it understandingly in at least one important area with its fellow faiths.

## 2. *How Shall Man Achieve Salvation?*

The second context in which it is significant to compare one religion with another is with regard to their respective interpretations of the meaning of salvation. For salvation is the main business of any religion; all religious faiths are primarily plans of salvation. Hence, to know what it proposes in this area is to know considerable about the basic thrust or fundamental texture of a faith; there are, indeed, few more revealing facts to know about it than how it proposes to save mankind, or few better ways to compare two religions than by contrasting their respective plans for salvation.

In passing it should be noted that salvation is not the exclusive property of religions in the broader sense. Art, philosophy, science, politics, and ethics are also ways of salvation—patterns for organizing humanity for the saving of itself from a variety of evils. Art would save man from ugliness and boredom; philosophy from the unexamined life and the incoherent intellectual world; science, as the epitome of all practical disciplines, would save us from ignorant slavery to natural forces and the more severe physical threats to life and welfare; poli-

tics would provide a bulwark against social chaos, anarchy or civil war within, and against aggression from without; ethics would save us from unprincipled and unregulated conduct. Salvation of some sort is therefore a major human concern, even apart from religion.

When religions put forward their disciplines of salvation they are thus in a somewhat crowded field. Indeed, there is at times considerable duplication or even competition between sacred and secular plans of salvation, for at some stages of cultural development their respective goals are almost identical. For example, primitive religions seek very materialistic ends, the same sort that are sought by magic and practical skill—at least as far as practical results are concerned. At the national level religion may often be closely identified with patriotism; it is, in fact, almost indistinguishable from it. What is it, then, that differentiates the religious from other types of salvation?

We may say at this point, in anticipation of the later full-scale discussion, that the religious variety often differs from others in its nature and scope rather than in its content. Religious plans of salvation may parallel others closely at some stages of culture; but their constant thrust, as religious, is toward a more ultimate, final, or complete degree of salvation than is offered by their rivals. Where other plans envisage only a temporary stay of execution, so to speak, a partial assuagement of man's ills, or a slight enlargement of human hopes, religions encourage the hope of a complete salvation from frustration and failure, both personal and social, liberation from the sharply defined limits of human life, and rescue from disease and death itself. They hope to achieve the preservation and even the increase of those values that man holds dear, and to gain for him an enduring personal significance in the face of all the destructiveness with which time and eternity threaten him. *Religious salvation is the attempted infinite extension of all the other plans of salvation to the ultimate degree.*

Yet there also comes to be, as religion develops, a difference in *quality* between religious and nonreligious salvations. Some of this represents a loss of territory for religious salvation: religion becomes less certain that it can alter events in the physical world, and turns to the moral and spiritual realms; the hope of salvation in a life beyond this present one bulks larger in its thinking. And it has also become more convinced that the truly important end in human salvation is not material betterment, but spiritual character. Hence, while other types of salvation do touch on such spiritual values, religion concentrates its main force on their realization.

After this glance at nonreligious salvations as compared to the religious variety in general, the main question still remains: how do religions differ from each other in this respect? And here we may suggest a series of three pertinent questions. We shall need first to ask of any religion: "*From* what do you pro-



pose to save men?" Much can be told about the character of a religious faith by its answer to this question. Is it from drought, physical danger, hostile spirits, personal or social destruction? Or is it from spiritual and moral evils, such as hatred, ill will, envy, pride, sensuality, untruthfulness, or falsity? or is it some combination of several of these? In any case, the answer a religion gives to the question is of vital importance.

Or, secondly, we may state the converse side of the same inquiry: "To what do you propose to save men?" The answer to this question is nearly always twin to the answer to the previous one. Primitives hope for long life, many children, and material abundance. National religions hope for the growth and increasing power of the social group. And on still other levels the achievement of a personal spiritual and moral perfection becomes a main feature of salvation: love, serenity, inner integrity, steadfastness of will, rightness of motive, and purity of thought and desire are frequently emphasized facets of religious perfection. To this supreme goal of personal perfection is often added the desire for continuing and increased fellowship with God, in which the perfection that men achieve on earth may be their portion forever. And some religions add also to the content of their idea of salvation, the hope of a bettered world to come, a kingdom of heaven or a messianic age on earth—*i.e.*, the redemption of an imperfect society.

A third area of interest concerns the *means* by which salvation is to be gained. Now means to an end are often no more than a reflection or implication of the goals sought through them. As long as religion sought a physical kind of salvation in comfort and security of a material sort, its methods were the crudely physical ones of sacrifice, incantation, and magic spell; it could scarcely be otherwise. Where the religious goals were the preservation, prosperity, and power of some tribe or nation, then warfare and physical coercion were blessed by the priest. The Roman priesthood made a science of the proper performance of the state rituals guaranteed to secure the military and political backing of the gods. There have also been other means employed by religions for the attainment of salvation: fasting, celibacy, self-denial, prayer, moral disciplines, meditation, mystic trance, deeds of mercy. These too are dictated by the kind of salvation sought—obviously of a different sort from the first-mentioned.

But the means to salvation also affect the goal sought, and especially the seeker. The seeker after salvation cannot for long follow a method radically at odds with the kind of salvation he professes to hope for, without changing his goal or changing himself in the process. There is no doubt that one who seeks God through sacrifice of animals, and another who seeks Him by an inward spiritual discipline of the thoughts and affections, will end up as different persons and with a different kind of salvation, no matter if they profess to serve

the same God. And since the means are always more easily observed than the final goal, it is only natural that we can and must judge a religion by the path it chooses in its search for salvation.

The fourth and final question to be put to religions in this context is: "*Who* is to be saved according to your plan? How inclusive is the hope offered?" We shall find that here religions vary widely. Some of them think almost exclusively in terms of the salvation of their particular society—especially primitive and national groups. It is not always that other groups are deliberately excluded; it is only that they are not specifically included. "Our religion," they would say, "is for us. Our god or gods are interested mainly in us as a special or chosen people." Others are universal in intention—hoping for the salvation of the whole world, but considering themselves to be indispensable instruments in that salvation. Some few consider themselves to contain the small, select number of those destined to be saved (a number never to be enlarged beyond a certain point), either by virtue of some divine decree or because the majority of mankind prefers its ignorant darkness to their proffered light.

Thus, when we come to consider religions in terms of their character as ways of salvation, we shall be concerned with the questions we have sketched above: the nature of the perils from which men are to be saved; the positive hope or good to which men are to be brought; the methods various religions consider best fitted to achieve their salvation both from evil and to good; and the number and quality of those who are to be included in the ark of salvation. Having observed religions in this respect, we shall have fitted another essential piece into our final picture of what religion is and does for mankind.

### 3. *How Shall Man Answer His Basic Queries?*

The third important area in which we must examine religions with regard to their main differences is that of the intellectual formulation of their basic beliefs; for all religions, each in its own way, make a claim to truth. Considering themselves to be ways of saving mankind, they must perforce be able to point out the landmarks along the road for those whom they seek to save. They choose one way as a way of salvation rather than another, because they believe certain things to be true, and others to be untrue, about the world in which men live. It is on the basis of this knowledge that they claim, that they recommend a specific way to avoid the ills and to overcome the evils that afflict mankind.

In this, their capacity as guides along the way of salvation, religions must then present some sort of statement about the world and human life in it. They must have a sufficient theory of the nature of the universe to give man his spiritual bearings, to help him orient himself to the basic nature of that universe, and to conduct himself in a manner calculated to ensure his salvation.



✓ And actually such has been and is the case historically. All religions present some sort of central viewpoint about the kind of universe in which man lives and his proper relation to it. In primitive religions this is seldom explicitly expressed—one must read it between the lines, and find it in the unconscious assumptions that underlie the primitive manner of life and religious ritual. But it is there in essence. And of course in more developed religions there has been considerable effort expended in answering these basic queries that have exercised the mind of man from the beginning. The answers religions give to such questions are one of the most important ways to estimate their worth, by means of which we may significantly compare them with each other.

✓ What, then, are these basic questions? We may distinguish four of them. There is first the question of *human origins*. There is scarcely a religion that has not dealt with this at length—certainly none among the major living religions. The interest of the question is apparent. From whence came the world and mankind? How did this visible world and its order come into being? The religious bearing of the question is evident. For when one raises the question about the beginning of the world he is also asking about the nature of the Power that brought it into being, and presumably sustains it, and whether that Power demands anything of men by way of duty or obligation.

The second question is the logical extension of the first. If the world began in such and such a way, what then is the *nature of the Power that created and controls it*? That there is such a Power of some sort or other religion needs not to be persuaded; indeed, it is the fundamental conviction of all religion that it apprehends such a Power or powers; in this all religions are one. But in the manner in which that Power is to be conceived there are major differences.

These differences may be described as of three sorts. There is first the division between those who conceive of the Supreme Reality as one and those who conceive of it as many—that is, the difference between monotheism and polytheism. We might distinguish a somewhat intermediate type—already noted—which is sometimes called henotheism, in which one god is chosen (like one wife) for exclusive worship, but the reality of other gods (like other men's wives) is not denied. A second division is in terms of the personal or impersonal nature of this reality. Some religions strongly contend for belief in the personal quality in God; others would prefer to think of the supreme reality as "It" rather than "He"—in terms of Being, Power, Moral Order, or the Absolute, but not as Person. ✓ And there is finally the crucial distinction as to the dominant character of this Reality: is it simply power, both constructive and destructive, or is it also moral in character? Is it well- or ill-disposed toward mankind, or simply indifferent? Is it all-powerful, or limited in power, and needing man's

help to achieve final victory? Is there an opposing force of evil—if this Power be conceived as good—or simply a neutral but hampering element in the nature of the universe with which It must strive? Can we describe this reality at all, or is it rather an inscrutable Absolute above and beyond our good and evil, our suffering and gladness? All these views have been or are now held by various religions.

The importance of this question—or rather the importance of the differing answers religions give to the questions in this area—can scarcely be exaggerated: for a religion's conviction about the kind of supreme reality that it serves is the core of all its thought, its emotional quality, its ethical flavor, its ritual, its conception of the way of salvation, and its institutional structure. This is not to say that every religion consistently carries out the implications of its theological position in every detail, nor to deny that perhaps the ritual, social, and institutional patterns of a faith may in turn affect its conception of the Object of its worship. Yet there are bound to be profound differences between the man who worships several gods and another who worships only one, or between the pattern of the faith and practice of the person who conceives of Supreme Reality as impersonal (It) and the one who believes in the personal qualities of that Reality.

Although this is undoubtedly the most fundamental of all the questions religions seek to answer, there are two others of great importance. One is the question of the nature and destiny of man. *What is man?* (in the words of the Hebrew psalmist); in what light shall he consider himself? Is he like the beast, or divine in nature? What supreme purpose shall he seek to fulfill in his living? What is his final destiny; what is the ultimate disposition the universe will make of him individually, of his society, and of the whole race of mankind? Does he have a voice in deciding, or is he the plaything of forces beyond his power to control or influence? Such are the questions to which all religions have given answers—answers that have made an important difference to those who believed them. *Does not man himself decide?*

And, finally, there is the *problem of evil and suffering*. Why is it that men, good and bad alike, suffer? Is there a reason for it—some explanation to be found somewhere, sometime; or is the question itself meaningless? Particularly if there is a God who is all-powerful or all-inclusive, what is He doing about suffering? And what can the religious man do about the many forms of suffering and evil that plague mankind from birth to death, and of which death is the greatest and worst? Again, no religion has existed that has not in some form or other given answer to these perplexities; nor can we evaluate any religion properly till we know its answer to them.



#### 4. *Summary*

These, then, are the areas, inclusive in their scope, fundamental in their importance to mankind, in which religions have operated, and in which we must observe them at work in more detail: First, the area of the societal forms religion has taken, and the kind of group life it has created. To this area the next part, "Religion as Social Pattern," will be devoted. Second, there is the area that expresses the main concern of religion, the bringing of help and release to mankind. The part entitled "Religion as Salvation" will deal with this phase of religion. And third, Part IV, "Religion as Question and Answer," will consider how various faiths have dealt with the four main areas of religious and intellectual concern we have just discussed. When we have completed such a survey we shall be in a position to consider in a final chapter how we may evaluate religion and religions for our own thinking.

## PART II

### RELIGION AS SOCIAL PATTERN



# SECTION I

## HUMAN COMMUNITY AND RELIGION

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### *Chapter XI*

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#### SOCIETY, SOCIETIES, AND THE INDIVIDUAL

In a culture such as ours, in which the role and importance of the individual are strongly accented, it is difficult for us to think of any area of human interest except in individualistic terms. Society, we tend to think, is composed of separate units called persons; its ideas and life are simply the sum of individual ideas and lives, the nature of which each individual has decided for himself. The individual determines society, and stands over against it as an independent force; he makes himself into what he desires to be, according to the terms of his own choosing.

Our thinking about religion is often set also in such an individualistic context. It has been defined as "what a man does with his solitariness"—the end result of a lonely pilgrimage of personal faith. Those of us who are Protestants will undoubtedly think of religious institutions like the church as groups of people who have voluntarily come together and decided what that church shall be and do; the institution is simply the sum of the religious habits and convictions of its membership. And individuals who seek to cut themselves off from organized religious life and live a solitary religious life appear in modern culture in large numbers.

Yet anthropology and sociology are teaching us that there is another pattern of human development that cannot be neglected, and that must be thoroughly studied if we are to avoid the distortions of the individualistic interpretation. It is that the community or institution is primary, and the individual secondary and to some extent derived from it. Even in the most personal and private phases of his development the individual is affected by his social surroundings.

*bar-f.* He cannot be interpreted or understood even as a personal entity apart from his environing group life; the solitary individual, existing in his own right and fashioning himself and his ideas in personal privacy, is an unreal abstraction.

### 1. *The Community and the Individual*

The most obvious relationship of the individual to his community is that of dependence on it. This dependence is present at all levels of society, but is greatest at the primitive level, as we have noted in other connections. Here we further emphasize the absoluteness of that dependence. In primitive society the individual scarcely exists as such—save in a physical sense; the community life and pattern are all-embracing. Social organization approaches that of the ant hill or bee colony in its tightness of control, and in the instinctive following by the individual of a mass pattern of action. The individual has no resources, either inner or outer, to differentiate himself markedly from his fellows, or for rebellion against the established way of life.

Such deviations as he may achieve are strictly of a minor sort—decorative rather than functional; and even in minor areas taboos often rigidly mark out well-defined courses of action. The individual considers his actions, not as freely or independently determined by himself, but in terms of their congruence with the group life and interests; as an individual he has little value, save as he forwards the life of the group. Should the individual—rather improbably—separate himself radically from the group pattern of life, it would mean total destruction of himself and perhaps of his family; he would be an outlaw, cut off from physical necessities, psychologically alienated and spiritually isolated, driven to his death by both outward and inward forces.

Nor are the leaders of primitive communities—the chiefs, medicine men, shamans, and witch doctors—really more independent of their communities and their traditions than the commoner. There is, to be sure, a certain amount of personal distinction and discretionary power that goes along with these offices, and ambitious individuals may well magnify their power by enlarging their claims and improving their techniques. Yet they are limited, perhaps even more than the humbler members of the community, by their very position: as leaders of a nonindividualistic community, where the communal interest absorbs all other interests, they must express the traditional pattern in its fullest measure in order to maintain that position. Their leadership is, so to speak, a function of the community life; they are prisoners of the community—though favored prisoners—as a queen bee is the prisoner of her communal function. Even the leader may not break with the pattern or violate ancient taboos; for he more than any other will be punished for it.

As societies develop, the complete dependence of the individual upon his



community is somewhat modified. Physically speaking, he is not as narrowly dependent upon a given community for his sustenance; he may choose another type of occupation from that of his father or clan, or vary somewhat his way of pursuing it. (This is only generally true, for advanced societies often create their own multiplicity of caste or occupational distinctions, ironbound in their rigidity.) But, more importantly, he achieves a certain spiritual independence; he is not as directly dependent on outward society to differentiate him from the beast or keep him from being reabsorbed into unthinking nature. He is willing to attempt variation in the social pattern; rebels and doubters may begin to set up separate spiritual housekeeping, and geniuses arise to express themselves.

Yet man never comes to be completely independent of his society, whatever the advanced stage of his culture or the height of his attainments as an individual. Let us observe what society does for man in varying form, but none the less truly, at all levels. It provides him physical birth, gives him the means of sustaining physical life, and furnishes him at least a measure of protection from enemies; thus on the physical level it is parent, nourisher, and guardian. Society also provides the individual with fellowship with his kind; and this is as necessary to him as air, food, or water, for some group must give him the sense of belonging or he may literally die of loneliness. He must be among those with whom he can communicate. In this, man is not different from the animals; but in the greater range and variety of his communication and fellowship lies his superiority. As community seeker his works of organization are fearful and wonderful, and infinitely varied; yet the goal of all his many social groups is basically one: fellowship with his kind.

Society does still more. It is also man's parent and nourisher in matters intellectual and spiritual; it is the force that brings his intellect, his ideas, and his ideals to birth. For when he is born he is largely devoid of any distinctively human qualities, save physical form and innate capacity to become human; but in company with other individuals—and only thus—he becomes a self-conscious person. Society provides him a language in which to formulate his thoughts and communicate them; it provides thoughts for him to think, ideal goals to strive for, a pattern of action to follow. It surrounds him with a context for his continuing development and expression, so that he may put his own special meanings into its language and achieve personal fulfillment through its institutions and social life. It is thus the matrix that gives form and meaning to man's whole life. Without it man would never be a person; apart from it he could not achieve his own unique individuality.

Although it has been implied in the above, it must be specifically pointed out that society provides man with a center for his emotional loyalties beyond his own immediate welfare. In his environing culture there are objects of esthetic

and intellectual interest, ethical value, and personal loyalty that carry man into the wider reaches of his development. Even society itself may become such an object of devotion, in the form of one or another of the units into which it is continually dividing itself.

## 2. *The Community and Its Tradition*

Woven ineradicably into the structure of any stable social group is its tradition. In the beginning was the tradition; and then the group, and then the individual, so to speak. To be sure, traditions are formulated by individuals and grow up along with the group. Yet except for natural biological groups, such as the family, whose coherence is built mainly on physical factors, the true center of coherence for social groups is found in their traditions.

By tradition we mean any pattern of thought, belief, usages, or established mode of action passed along by the group to its new members. Even biological family units are somewhat dependent on their group traditions for successful continuance. "Tradition" here would include everything from family eating and living habits or the long-standing family joke, up to and including the basic ethical and religious standards adopted by it. Such factors hold the family together and prescribe its character fully as much as physical proximity and relationship.

But the family "tradition" is only a small circle within other much larger and more stable circles; its "culture" is a small subculture created and permeated in large part by the culture of the greater and more inclusive society about it. Properly speaking, it is only in these larger units of society that we may speak of cultural traditions—in regions, nations, civilizations; thus we speak of the cultures of Egypt, China, Rome, Greece, or of Western Christian Europe. Yet the essential nature of both the small and large varieties of community tradition is the same; tradition is that relatively permanent cultural pattern that distinguishes one group from another and furnishes continuity to each group, despite a changing membership.

The community and its tradition are thus inextricably intermingled. The community is the actual expression of the traditional pattern in time and space. The custom, rite, code of conduct, and institution are the body of which the tradition is the spiritual core; either institution or tradition may be changed or affected by a change in the other. Thus historical circumstances may force a community to change its form or mode of operation; as a result its tradition must be altered. Or it may be that the tradition will be altered by the work of an individual from within; then as a result the life of the whole community will be modified.

An illustration or two from the history of cultures may suffice to make this



situation clear. If one should speak of the democracy of the United States he would be speaking of a complex situation produced by factors both physical and cultural. The geographical separateness of the American continent, its previous habitation by only a sparse and primitive people, and its rich natural resources, have furnished the physical conditions. The polyglot population, with its practical necessity for toleration, and certain of the great Christian and humanistic traditions of human freedom, have blended to form the American tradition. Thus spiritual tradition plus physical community of interest have resulted in our way of life. Or if one should speak of Western Christendom he would need to recognize that it is both Western and Christian. Even the word Christian implies a number of factors affecting either the tradition or the community: the mother Jewish community and tradition, the life and teachings of Jesus, the permeation of early Christianity by Greek thought forms, and all the subsequent political and social pressures on the Christian community.

Changes in tradition are usually very slow, however; they may be almost imperceptible to those involved in them. Our use of the word "traditional" bears witness to this; for it has the connotation of the long-established, the unchanging. Especially is this true at the primitive level, where traditions are purely anonymous works of the far-off unknown fathers, and have attained the authority of unquestioned law. Even at higher levels of culture, when outstanding leaders give distinctively new directions to traditions, the radicalness of the transition is often easier to see when looking backward than at the time. For example, the fissure between Christianity and Judaism was at first very slight. Jesus was an unlicensed teacher with some rather radical interpretations of the law, but well within its main pattern as far as his contemporaries were concerned. His early disciples were scarcely conscious of departing from the faith of their fathers in their proclamation of his resurrection, and still maintained their worship in the synagogues and temple. Not until the work of Paul was well under way did the separation that was to carry them far from Judaism become apparent.

Yet over a period of time traditions do change, and quite radically. For the sameness of tradition is not that of the mountain's unchanging face, which may be altered only by a cataclysm, but the supple, dynamic adaptation of an organism. The Hebrew conquerors did not destroy the agricultural festivals of the conquered Canaanites, they adapted them, dedicating them to Jehovah rather than to the Baals, and changing them in part to fit the structure of their own historical past. So also ceremonial may change its form to fit a new situation. The *rites de passage* which are observed at transition points in primitive life, like birth, puberty, initiation into adult society, marriage, and death, have long ago been left behind by civilized societies; yet these societies mark such events by

their ceremonies of baptism or christening, confirmation, coming-out parties, initiations, marriage and funeral ceremonies. Some dim memories of the earlier rites may be found in the later ones, though their actual form is much altered.

One curious sidelight on all traditional thought and usage, whether religious or otherwise, is to be noted: change is often introduced under the guise of restoring or maintaining the old. Israel's prophets came to bring their people back to true loyalty to Jehovah; Jesus came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it. Protestant leaders of the Reformation sought to restore the Church to its primitive purity, and have themselves in turn often since been reformed by new sects. "New deals" in politics usually refer to precedents established on the part of the Founding Fathers; and totalitarianisms seek to refurbish and reinterpret the heroes of the national past as pioneers of the present order.

### 3. *The Religious Community and Its Members*

The inter-relation of the religious community and the individuals who belong to it is a special variety of the very general variety we have been discussing in society at large. And as a general rule we may say that the dependence of the religious individual on the religious community and tradition is narrower in scope but of greater intensity than in the larger society. That is to say, the religious community and its tradition represent as a rule a subculture within a greater culture, a subculture which is not quite as inclusive in its relationship to the individual as the larger group but more concentrated in quality.

This of course hardly applies to the primitive level of society. For here the religious group is not a separate one; here religion, rather than being a separate community and tradition, is a quality that pervades all social activities. And even within more advanced societies, religious groups have assumed a large degree of physical and social responsibility for their membership. One may think of small religious colonies, like the Shakers and Mormons of the United States, that have tried to be economically self-sufficient. Or there is the example of the medieval European monastery or convent, which held large estates that provided for the physical necessities of many and also furnished them with educational and spiritual training. One might live his whole lifetime in such an institution and hardly be aware of the outside world.

Yet these are exceptions rather than the rule—and only partial exceptions at that. The language used by these groups and the religious faith professed by them were not their own creations. Many who came into them came with the mental gifts and physical skills gained in an outside world. Much of their physical equipment came from the world about them; and their protection from foreign enemies was usually guaranteed by regional or national authorities.

But in other ways the community function of the religious group is intensi-



fied; this is particularly true with regard to the fellowship man seeks with those of his kind. The religious kind of fellowship may assume great importance—greater than the racial or national, though, as we have seen, it is sometimes allied with them. The very fact that such a fellowship is limited to those who have been converted to the faith or born into it may intensify the depth of its meaning. The hostility or indifference of surrounding groups, instead of weakening or destroying it, may weld members of the religious community together all the more strongly by producing in their rites a quality of exclusiveness or even of secrecy. So it was with the primitive Christian group in a pagan world; so it is with religious minorities like the Sikhs and Parsees of India. The very terms such groups use to describe themselves evidence their awareness of the closeness of the bond: "household of faith," "brothers and sisters in the faith," the Catholic designation of priest as "Father," the "thee" and "thou" of the Quaker. ✕

And speaking of language, we may go on to say that religious groups create their own subcultures; certain words become classic among them, achieving a rich, symbolic quality in the context of the faith group. There is, for instance, the word "love," central beyond all others in the Christian faith. Or consider the great and varied richness of religious symbol. The lotus, the cow, the cross-legged meditative posture, the cross in gesture or physical form, the rite of circumcision, the open Bible—all these and a multitude of others rouse peculiarly strong emotions among believers in the various faith groups. Though only in times of persecution may the symbols of a faith be jealously guarded—as when the Greek word for fish was used as a secret code word among early Christians—the symbols of religion are actually open secrets—open because everyone can behold them, but secret because their richness of meaning is only for the faithful.

There are still further reaches to the function that the religious community performs for its members. It gives the individual a special theater for the expression of his talents that society at large may deny him. Early Christian believers came mostly from the lower classes; they were slaves, freedmen, and artisans. Paul writes to the Corinthians in the first chapter of his first epistle to them, that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called" into the fellowship of faith. No doubt the humble believer—humble by outside standards—here became of greater importance; he was one of the brethren, perhaps an officer or leader in the group, though outside it he may have been a social nonentity.

On this last phase we may dwell for a moment more. The religious community gives the faithful a sense of significance, not just because they are perhaps leaders within it, but because of the group sense of destiny; for mem- ✓

bership in the religious group represents a special orientation to life. Here is a group that directs its activity and hope specifically toward ultimate goals, and orients itself throughout toward the highest reality, God. It may well be the possessor of a special message and a glorious destiny. John portrays Jesus saying to the small, disheartened group of disciples, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." That is, the world may despise you now, but later you will rule that world. Here is a group that knows where it and the world are going, and from within its life pattern one may act with absolute certainty. Here is a loyalty that reaches out beyond the world of time and sense, the frustrations of history, or the concerns of any earthly social group, to the illimitable fellowship with Eternal Goodness.

#### 4. *The Religious Community in the Total Community*

We have earlier dealt briefly with the tensions that the religious community creates within the total community. Here we shall examine those tensions somewhat more in detail, for they are one of the inevitable consequences of the development of the specifically religious society.

Religious groupings have frequently been revolutionary; perhaps one might say that from the viewpoint of the larger society the religious group is inherently revolutionary, or at least of socially disruptive potentiality. For the religious grouping offers a new center of loyalty of a different sort from other centers of social loyalty; and this difference makes the tension between the religious and the nonreligious group potentially the most explosive in existence. This is because the religious center of gravity is in a more-than-human reality.

✓ The religious group conceives that the ultimate sanction of its views or way of life is supernatural; its truths are held to be absolute, as contrasted with other relative truths. Therefore religious authority often claims a supremacy over all secular political authority, and—either in the form of actual organizational or individual opposition—may represent the most thoroughgoing and fundamental hostility a secular society can encounter.

The extremest form of a total opposition between religious and secular authorities would be that of a worldwide fellowship of faith, which acknowledged no national or racial lines, no duties to groups or societies over and above or in competition with its duties to God, and which was able to maintain an organization of truly universal scope. No doubt this may be said to be the goal of all of the great missionary religions in some sense or other, but their own divisions and the jealous eye of political sovereignty have prevented its realization.

✓ Actually many variant types and degrees of adjustment have been made between religious societies and their societal environment. The type of adjustment depends largely on what each party to the situation claims. The one with the



minimum of tension is where the social and the religious group are coterminous. This is the case where a society is completely dominated by one faith, as with medieval Europe and the Roman Catholic faith, or as in many Mohammedan countries today. Both parties to the "agreement" are happy. The government supports the faith by granting honor and official standing to its dignitaries and by seeking to root out all heresies, that is, all opposing faiths. It takes the standards of the recognized national religion as its guiding principles. And the religiously faithful pray and work for the welfare of the government with almost the same ardor as for the faith, thus fusing loyalty to religion and to nation in one indissoluble whole.

But religious-secular tensions are not entirely erased by such an arrangement; beneath the superficial harmony a struggle for authority may develop between state and church. Such was the situation in medieval Europe in which the "national" sovereigns and the Church—meaning the Pope—often opposed each other. It may also occur when governments become so increasingly secularized that they only nominally support the dominant religious tradition; or it may come about when the political government seeks to use the religious group for its purposes, or vice versa.

Such a doubly totalitarian situation does not, indeed, often remain for long pure and undefiled; internal forces and external pressures constantly threaten its unity. Medieval Christendom was broken wide open by rising nationalism, and by the Protestant Reformation. Both politically and religiously, as well as intellectually, Europe grew restive and threw off the Catholic domination. Even Spain, the most solidly and consistently Catholic nation in Europe, has maintained its religious-political solidarity only by continuing persecutions. If Mohammedan countries still present a rather solid phalanx, it is largely because they have remained until rather recently in a static social condition, and have been to a great extent isolated from the remainder of the world. Even here insurgent and often crassly secular forces are making headway, as modern Turkey well demonstrates.

The more frequent situation is that of the religious minority within the larger political community; the pattern of adjustment here has varied immensely. The general Oriental pattern has been that of the flexible toleration of many varieties within the total framework. China had brief periods of hostility between Buddhism and Confucianism, but finally settled down to a noncompetitive compromise between them. Japan's militant Buddhists were once put down by force, and the first Christian (Catholic) missionaries were destroyed in a general reaction against foreignness; but these were exceptions. Until the intrusion of Islam into India the various sects of Hinduism lived peaceably together on the whole—though within the tight framework of caste structure.

Part of the harmonious adjustment in the East was due to the flexible interpretation given to religious dogma, which we have already noted. But almost equally it was the result of the religious disillusion with the world which did not find worldly concerns worth fighting for; for its gospels have been predominantly those of withdrawal from the world.

In the Middle East and the West the situation has been far different. The militant attitudes of Jew, Moslem, and Christian in matters of religious belief and their active political and historical concern have led them into religious persecutions and wars of all sorts and sizes. It is true that nationalist politics have played a considerable part in the wars between Moslem and Christian, in which the cause of the nation and of the faith were linked. (The Crusades were only a partial exception to this, a war *somewhat* more religious than political.) For the rest of it the scale and nature of the conflict depended mostly on which side was in the majority. Jews as a perpetual minority were always the persecuted. Christians in Moslem countries were often well treated, though placed under a perpetual monetary levy. And Protestant persecutions of Catholics were fewer than Catholic persecutions of Protestants, mainly because there were fewer dominantly Protestant cultures.

✓ For the most part wholesale religious persecutions are a thing of the past even in the West. It is still true that Christians are not welcome in some of the militantly Moslem countries. Protestants labor under heavy disabilities, both civil and ecclesiastical, in Spain and Latin America, and Catholics under some civil disabilities in the Scandinavian countries. And Jews are scarcely more than tolerated in many European countries—even with the supposedly abhorred Nazi tortures only a few years past. Yet on the whole we live in an era of mutual religious toleration among religions themselves; the more harmonious adjustments between variant sects and official state churches indicate that the latter possess the shadow of prestige and power more frequently than their substance. The United States has tried one of the most completely tolerant patterns in existence, that of the absolute equality of all faiths before the law. Only on particular and partial issues have there been conflicts between state and church; the Mormon practice of polygamy was declared illegal in the latter part of the 19th century; pacifists have been jailed for failure to register for military service; and Jehovah's Witnesses suffer some legal disabilities, but in the main have been vindicated in their struggle for freedom of religious expression.

The most serious conflict between the religious and secular communities of the 20th century is occurring in the political arena. Although there have been persecutions of religion for political reasons in the past—as that of the Christian group by Rome—the persecution of religion by totalitarianism is brand new in its intensity and thoroughness. Totalitarianism of either left or right takes the



religious claim to "outside" or transcendent authority seriously, and will have none of it. Such a claim on the part of religion is the supreme obstacle to totalitarian domination of a society, for here is a potential source of rebellion within the spirit of man that threatens the future of the state, even though open opposition be temporarily quelled. Because religion's reference to a more-than-human reality and a trans-social standard of right and wrong undermines or denies the totality of totalitarianism, the latter can never rest until the religious groups within it are thoroughly perverted or completely destroyed.

## Chapter XII

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### PRIMITIVE SOCIETY AS A RELIGIOUS GROUP

After this very cursory sketch, in which we have emphasized the importance and nature of the group function in human life, both in its general and in its specifically religious forms, we turn to concrete descriptions of the differing ways in which religious groupings have appeared in the history of mankind, and have related themselves to other human groups. The general pattern of the approach will be obvious from reading the outline of this section. Beginning with primitive societies in which religious groupings are not well defined, we shall proceed up the ladder through those levels at which religious and natural groupings coincide, to the stage at which religions define their own distinctive groups over against the total society. Most of the materials chosen for illustration are contemporary, though a few examples in the intermediate stage are from the past.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. *Primitive Society and Its Religious Groups*

As we have already suggested in other contexts, religious groupings as such do not usually exist on the primitive level; here religion is rather in the nature of a permeative viewpoint that affects the whole of society, than a specific organization of activity. This lack of differentiation of the religious from other functions does not, however, indicate a nonreligious quality or antireligious bias. Indeed, the reverse in some sense is true: religion is all-important and all-pervasive—far less likely to be the artificial and segregated affair that it is in highly civilized societies. To quote:

✓ It cannot be too often emphasized that religion is a much more important factor in the secular life of primitive people than it is with civilized communities . . . indeed, it is the most important of all. It enters into all of their family and social relations, into their most commonplace activities and their daily occupation—in short there is

<sup>1</sup> This pattern of dealing with the social groupings of religion was suggested by Joachim Wach's *The Sociology of Religion*, University of Chicago Press, 1944, though illustrative materials come from other sources.



no aspect of native life which has not its religious significance, and which is not more or less controlled by religious rites or prohibitions.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, primitive life and religion are co-extensive. And the reason is not far to seek. Life at this stage is so permeated with a sense of man's direct dependence on natural forces for the very bread he puts in his mouth and the air he breathes, that a strong sense of "natural piety" pervades all action. Unshielded by any protective screen of scientific techniques from the raw force of nature, living in the most intimate contact with wind, weather, sun, tides, plants, and animals, he is acutely aware of the power of nature over him, and of how little he actually knows of that power. He therefore seeks by all means at his disposal to relate himself beneficially to the forces that rule the world.

We have already noted that even primitive man makes the general distinction between the sacred and the common, and often marks it out by physical boundaries. But neither half of this duality is institutionalized, as it is with us, into the specifically religious and the definitely nonreligious or secular; the two elements mingle confusedly. One excellent example of the primitive stage in which magic, religion, mystery, and the common life are all intermingled with little differentiation is to be found among the Trobriand Islanders. A second and more developed, yet primitive, pattern of relatively little religious differentiation is represented by the Hopi Indians.

#### a. *The Trobriand Islanders*

The Trobriand Islands are an archipelago east of New Guinea in the Pacific Ocean. So primitive is the Islanders' way of life and so indistinct any specifically religious element that many would deny the name of religion to this people's ceremonial pattern. Their myths have little or nothing to say about gods, spirits, or even human beginnings. What tradition they have has to do with inherited social usages and magical patterns of action. This inherited magical ritual, handed down from generation to generation by successive leaders—or sometimes purchased at a great price by one out of the line of succession—is an important part of every major activity among the islanders. The garden farming, which is a main source of the Islander's livelihood, is surrounded at every stage by ritual. The garden magician consecrates the site by appropriate ceremonial when it is cleared of scrub and burned over. He presides at the planting and harvesting, and at several points along the way uses appropriate charms over the growing crops. Likewise the launching of a boat is never undertaken without the repetition of the magical rite guaranteeing its seaworthiness and success. Any slip in these performances would destroy the efficacy of the rite.

<sup>2</sup> Jack H. Driberg, *The Lango: A Nilotic Tribe of Uganda*, Unwin, 1923, p. 233, quoted by Wach, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

Yet the Islander does not at any point skimp on work or seek to make his magic a substitute for it—if we believe our observer:

It is also important to understand rightly the natives' ideas about the relation between efficiency and the results of craftsmanship. Both are considered indispensable . . . each of the two has its own province. If a canoe is obviously badly built, the natives will know why it sails slowly and is unwieldy. But if one of two canoes, both apparently equally well constructed, surpasses the other in some respect, this will be attributed to magic.<sup>3</sup>

But the perils or hostile powers from which the islander seeks to guard his enterprises are never clearly specified. They seem not to arise from hostile ancestral spirits—or spirits of any sort, for that matter. Perhaps the dangers are somewhat of the nature of mana-force.

Yet despite the lack of any specifically religious references in his vocabulary we can see that here magic performs the functions elsewhere assumed by religion, and may say that the Islander's way of life is at least *implicitly* religious. The magical rites are held to have descended from the long-ago past, when they were even more potent; thus they fulfill the function taken over in other cultures by a religious tradition. And the rites themselves might be said to contain a sort of unexpressed belief about the powers that affect human life; at least they represent nonmechanical ways of dealing with the universe. Implied, if not stated, is this vague but strong conviction: "The world about us is thus and so, and must be treated in these approved (magical) ways if we are to live." And the possession of magical powers by the leaders of the group provides a measure of social organization and control—even though they are far from constituting a "church." Here is the raw material and functional equivalent of religious organization, rite, and belief, though not their full form.

#### b. *The Hopi Indians*

The Hopi Indians of Arizona are characterized by a reasonably primitive way of life that has maintained much of its traditional form despite the strong pressures exerted by American ways. Their pattern of life is a good example of the inextricably close connection between religion and the basic concerns of life that is characteristic of primitive religion. The tribal name itself signifies a distinctive way of life: "Hopi" means a "peaceful, good, happy" way of life. And for the member of the tribe it provides a traditional way of living that includes in one organic structure an economic, social, and religious pattern; religion, art, and agriculture are not separate interests but variant phases of the basic life pattern. Religious theories and beliefs are neither explicit nor separable

<sup>3</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Dutton, 1922, p. 116.



from the rest of the culture; they can be distinguished only by a long gleaning of covert hints, and by examining the obscure allusions contained in the ceremonial forms.

The history of the people and the geography of Hopi-Land have given the present culture and religion most of their distinguishing features. More or less deliberately—though helped along by circumstances—the Hopi have chosen for their dwelling place the arid mesas of Arizona, as a refuge from predatory white and Indian neighbors. This area has been rather satisfactory in its capacity as a physical and cultural refuge, but has exacted a toll in terms of a low economic living standard, and has thus impressed itself indelibly on the Hopi way of life; in all his thinking and living the Hopi is acutely conscious of his relation to nature. In a barren country like his the margin between life and death is very narrow; it may be destroyed by drought or the improvident use of the always meager food supplies. The lives of the individual and the group hang on the merest thread; therefore the situation calls for a careful social discipline, and the favorable disposition of the natural powers.

For the Hopi the order of events is one organic whole, with both a social and a natural aspect. Man is not set off from nature, but is a part of it, and his every act has some effect on nature. Life is a delicately balanced game that he must learn to play skillfully. His ceremonial is therefore an organic part of the natural cycle of seasons; to some extent—and perhaps just to that extent necessary to guarantee his survival—he believes that he can thus affect the natural cycle. Hence, though there is that lighter side to ritual in which the clowns go in for a species of burlesque, the general flavor of ceremonial is that of the utmost seriousness. A student of the Hopi culture thus writes about the importance of the ceremonial to the community:

The Hopi ceremonial cycle provides an annual series of elaborate and colorful mystery plays which combine rhythmic movement, singing, impersonation, painting and other creative media in a typically Hopi way, and regularly express and reaffirm the Hopi world view in a symbolic, variegated, and highly spectacular manner. It thereby provides a means of expression and release to the whole community, spectators as well as dancers, and intensely recreating interludes in the daily routine. As such it is one of the most important integrating forces in Hopi life.<sup>4</sup>

The ceremonial year begins with the winter solstice ceremonies, whose purpose is the luring back of the sun from its declined position in the south to renewed life and vigor. The sun is viewed by the Hopi as one of their major deities, on whose strength they are especially dependent. Prayer sticks are offered for the whole order of creation, human and superhuman, animate and

<sup>4</sup> Thompson and Joseph, *The Hopi Way*, University of Chicago, 1947, p. 44.

inanimate, in keeping with the Hopi conception of the organic oneness of the universe.

The second great festival is the Bean Dance in February, in which particular attention is paid to guaranteeing the successful preparation and germination of beans, corn, and squash, and to the theme of fertility in general. Every four years children who have reached the age of puberty are initiated into a sort of affiliate membership in the community; and every year some attention is also paid to the ancestral spirits (*kachina*), who are believed to control the rain supply.

In July comes the Home Dance, which is directed toward hastening the ripening process among the crops; in August comes the Snake-Antelope (or Flute) Dance, which is a combination harvest and rain-bringing festival; and in November occurs the final major festival of the year. At this time the young men are admitted to full tribal status, fires are newly lighted in the dwellings from a central one kindled afresh by the priest, and the fertility theme is emphasized again and again in both men's and women's dances, which symbolically portray the male and female function in creativity.

Most of these festivals are carried on as dances in costume, in which the performers, wearing masks painstakingly prepared for the occasion over a long period, act out the major themes of the festival. If these rites are done properly they are supposed to insure sufficient rain, good health, and general welfare. The ancestral spirits or *kachina*, who sometimes appear as clouds, are thus rendered beneficent, and the inter-relation of people and universe is kept in balance.

Can such a pattern be called religious? It would seem so. Here, much more definitely than among the Trobrianders, there are some definite ideas concerning the universe, man's relation to it, his proper conduct in it, and a constant reference in ritual to more-than-human powers. Though still completely inter-fused with the total culture, religion can be distinguished as a force that permeates the whole of it and at every step patterns the Hopi way of life.

## 2. *Transitional*

At the primitive stage then, religion is both stronger and weaker than in its more clearly defined forms. It is stronger because it is more directly related to the basic pattern of group life. It is part and parcel of the social structure and ceremonial throughout their length and breadth; all religious and social expressions stand in intimately mutual relations to each other. For these religiously oriented traditions and rites have more than antiquity and beauty to recommend them; they are filled with the stuff of life, functionally interwoven with every important community activity, and directly related to physical sur-



vival. No religion means no survival. Thus religion in primitive life has the force and grandeur of the elemental powers of nature itself.

Yet it is also weak; it is not clearly differentiated from its counterfeits and its enemies. The impurities which it must later eliminate are not discerned from the substance of religion itself. Religion and magic, faith and superstition, ceremonial rite and ethical right, physical and moral powers, are constantly confused with each other. Because it is not a specific essence at the primitive level, it cannot achieve its properly effective ethical and spiritual witness, and may—without shame—share in the most cruel and repulsive orgies. If it has the grandeur of elemental powers it also shares their amorality.

Now this state, in which religion is only a diffused force throughout a culture, rather than a separate group or set of usages, can continue only as long as a given society is primitive and itself undifferentiated in nature. As soon as social, economic, or religious differentiation becomes at all pronounced this pattern breaks up. To be sure, this does not usually happen all at once; it may be a matter of centuries—though again it may take place in a generation or two, due to outside influences. Nor does the beginning of differentiation always mean its completion. We shall find that many of the instances we shall use for illustration, in which the natural grouping of family or clan is also the religious group, are only halfway forms, so to speak; they represent a social and cultural pattern in which religious factors are more distinct than among primitives, semi-institutionalized, and not yet full-fledged religion or a fully independent force.

Nor can we, as we go up the scale, actually turn our backs on the primitive elements in society and religion. For the term "primitive" is at best a relative one. There is no point, in fact, at which we can draw a neat line either in culture or religion and say: "Here ends the primitive once and forever, and here begins the civilized"; that supposedly more civilized something often turns out to have some embarrassingly primitive features. Or it may be that the primitive rites show a surprising vitality, continuing on into more advanced societies in almost their original form, or achieving an equivalent function in a somewhat different shape, or else receiving a thin veneer of "civilized" terminology and refinement. In any case we shall need to refer now and again to the primitive forms of religion, even when we have supposedly passed beyond them, because of the persistence of some of their features, or the illuminating parallel they may offer to later developments. At the same time we shall note those genuine intimations of the more distinctively religious society on the lower cultural levels that point to the future development of religion but that may still be often rather confusingly mingled with primitivism.

Finally, we may inquire as to the forces which precipitate religious differen-

tiation, and produce a definitely religious structure of thought and institution out of the undifferentiated primitive situation. Of course we cannot say that at even the most primitive level there are literally no distinctive religious manifestations; even there some types of differentiation are observable. For example, there is the separateness of professional function. The whole group may participate in the ceremonial and the whole culture be permeated with religious values, but some take more important parts than others. It is the leading men among the Hopi who have leading parts in the ceremonial; and only a few among the Trobrianders possess knowledge of magical secrets. And some further groupings of religious significance are found in these and other primitive societies in terms of age and sex distinctions.

Yet such distinctions in primitive society do not often seem to lead on to a further differentiation of the religious pattern. If it be asked why these particular distinctions have not led to further development in the religious area, the answer is twofold. First, these differences within the primitive group are usually a part of the age-old pattern, one of its ways of functioning; and the very operation of the more or less professional classes actually keeps the ancient tradition dominant and unchanged. And even if the professional leaders of the primitive community were to attempt any novelty, their success would be small, because the whole community from top to bottom is the prisoner of its traditional patterns; its leaders would not dare suggest a major deviation, nor, if they did, would any dare to follow them in it.

The other factor involved is that of economic and social conditions. The primitive economy is so simple that the range of possible occupations is not large. And, as we have before noted, the individual is unable to break away from the group to go it on his own, for that would be suicidal. In other words, neither social nor religious change can occur until the old pattern is modified or broken to provide the physical possibility of the innovator sustaining himself and his innovation. In truth, such factors have considerable importance, even on a much higher level than this; it can be said, for instance, that without the backing of powerful German princes Luther could not have led Reformation forces to their considerable degree of success in the face of a predominantly Catholic and hostile Europe.

Thus, only when we have a conjuncture of inner vitality and outward possibility, can religious differentiation occur. When the economy becomes varied enough to physically support social and religious innovations, and the social structure and tradition sufficiently flexible to allow important individual variations, then only can the religious potential for change become actual. These factors indeed mutually influence each other. When the simple one-level economy is disturbed, new classes rise to power and influence, new groupings take



on importance, and religion must modify its pattern in order to survive; the rituals of magic or religion built around ancient ways must be changed. And, conversely, as religion is freed from the tyranny of the past, and the genius finds footing to work within the religious tradition, its internal dynamic increasingly affects the society of which it is a part.

## SECTION II

# RELIGIOUS-NATURAL GROUPS

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### *Introductory*

We turn now to the stage of societal development that is intermediate between the religiously undifferentiated society, and the religiously differentiated society in which religion has marked out its distinctive sphere of thought and built its institutions. This intermediate situation is characterized by the alliance of religion and the *natural groups*. Let us clearly understand what this latter term signifies. It does not mean that society in its "natural" state—whatever that is—inevitably divides itself into these groups, or that none of them is artificial or man-made to any degree. It means simply that certain groups appear to be those into which men have rather naturally and prevalently organized themselves. And the four groups we shall distinguish as "natural" are these: the immediate biological *family* group; the *clan* or *kinship* group; the small geographical *community* group; and the *racial-national* group.

The alliance of religion with these groups, and its making their interests its own, scarcely needs explaining. It is not an elimination of that widely diffused religious interest found characteristically in primitive societies, but rather a concentrated and specialized expression of the same interest. Religion here is for the most part qualitatively the same; it represents the same basic concern with the fulfillment of human need and harmonious adjustment to the universe—only that need is now fulfilled in new ways and by new groupings. Thus these natural groups are ways of securing food, clothing, sexual satisfaction, fellowship, and mutual protection, and minister to the same concerns that bulk so large in primitive life and primitive religion. So when the biological family group, the clan, or the nation becomes a basically important social grouping, it inevitably becomes a focal point of religious concern, for the interests of religion still largely coincide with those of society as a whole.

It should be pointed out here that we are not presenting a neat chronological scheme of either social or religious development; family, clan, community, tribe, and nation did not necessarily or uniformly develop in that exact order; there are many variations. The family, for example, is more or less important socially



at many levels, but depends for its degree of importance on other factors than the level of civilization. Nor is the religious significance of these groups so uniformly great or small at any one juncture, that we can say: first primitive undifferentiated religion, then the natural-group religion, then universal religion. To quote:

It is a mistake to assume that the . . . classification into natural and specifically religious groups represents a chronological development. Although, broadly speaking, religions of universal character appear relatively late in history, specifically religious groups are found even in primitive society. However, it is not the "secular" group but rather that in which religious and social ties are identical which is most frequently encountered at less advanced levels of civilization.<sup>1</sup>

The advantages accruing to each other from the alliance of natural and religious groups are obvious. The natural group has a coherence of its own—biological, geographical, or economic, as the case may be. Therefore religion finds here a certain natural and physical unity to which it may attach itself as a base for operations, or in which it may achieve its social expression. Yet few groups live by bread or biology alone; hence religion ministers powerfully and necessarily to their natural coherence by the addition of its own peculiar spiritual cohesiveness. It permeates them with its values and surrounds them with its cloak of ritual and sacredness; in many instances it is the most essential of all the factors that hold the group together.

<sup>1</sup> Joachim Wach, *The Sociology of Religion*, p. 57.

## Chapter XIII

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### THE FAMILY

✓ The family unit of parents and children is perhaps the most natural of all the natural groups. There are, however, many modifications of this basic biological pattern to be found in different cultures. There is, for example, the practice of polygamy—frequently by the male side, less frequently by the female—which necessarily modifies the family pattern. Sometimes—though not as frequently as Sunday supplement writers indicate—there is a rather high degree of sexual promiscuity in primitive cultures, in which “husbands” and “wives” are rather light-heartedly shared out to friends. In some primitive cultures the birth of children is not connected with sexual intercourse so that the father has little or no sense of responsibility for the child. And sometimes the biological family unit is only a subordinate part of the clan or kinship group, divided even within itself by clan loyalties and obligations.

Despite these variations, however, the biological family is one of the most persistent social unities to be found. The mother’s biological relationship to the child and her natural responsibility for it during infancy, are factors she can scarcely evade, even should she wish to. Actually the mother almost never—and the father seldom—try to cut such ties with their offspring. Lowie assures us that even in social situations where the clan arrangement pulls the mother into one group and the father into another, and later divides the children from each other, the biological family relationship is never confused with any other in its intensity of kinship affection and sense of primary responsibility on the part of the physical parents for their children.<sup>1</sup>

There are, of course, other factors besides the biological relationship that tend to unify the family group. Economic forces often impose a close-knit unity on the family in most societies. The necessity of a small, compact working unit to provide a living for its child and adult members tends to favor the biological family unit, and even to exert a pressure toward monogamy. Many cultures have theoretically approved the practice of a man having more than one wife:

<sup>1</sup> *Primitive Society*, Boni and Liverwright, 1922, p. 66.



Old Testament law did not forbid it; the Koran expressly allows the Moslem to maintain four wives concurrently—to say nothing of concubines besides. Chinese culture also permitted a man several wives, though its social system graded them in degrees of importance and authority within the family structure. But only the well-to-do or the rulers in these societies could ordinarily afford more than one wife—let alone a harem; the common man had to content himself with one. In Judaism, what had once been a matter of necessity became a matter of principle, and by New Testament times, or even before, monogamy was the rule.

There are, besides these economic and biological ties, the affectional ones. No matter what the social tradition, there are few cultures if any in which the parents have lacked a strong emotional attachment to their children. Such attachment seems to be only indirectly affected by the level of the culture, and is even surprisingly strong in polygamous families, though here it may result in the selection of favorite sons or daughters to the partial exclusion of the others from paternal attention. Even where the clan arrangement places the children under the mother's roof apart from the father's clan, the father usually maintains a godfatherly status of a considerable degree of closeness.

Now it seems probable that such a unity would provide natural religious materials. For every closely associated group will in time fashion itself a pattern for living, or a stylized way of carrying on its activities; and if at the same time these activities are direct expressions of fundamental human concerns—not the merest social trivia—the group pattern may well become religious. Such is the case of the family. The natural physical events of family life—birth, puberty, marriage, and death—bear on the fundamental nature of life, and engage the most profound human emotions. Here is a small intimate group uniting itself for mutual protection against the hazards surrounding human life, and seeking to continue and enhance the life that is in them. What more inevitable than that the family should become a religious group, with its own ritual pattern, and the head of the household become its priest?

### 1. *Hindu Family Religion*

Family life is of central importance to the orthodox Hindu, and has a deep religious significance for him. The whole caste system, of which the family is an integral part, is a religious structure in which people are graded in terms of their supposed religious capacity, with the priestly Brahmins at the summit and the lowly Shudras at the bottom. As basic parts of this religious-social order, the family structure and its consequent duties are looked on as an area of the most sacred rights and obligations—not merely as natural social facts.

According to the ideal classical pattern, the life of the male Hindu falls into four main periods. (This applies primarily to the male, since women are second-class citizens in Hinduism.) The first period is that of childhood and youth, in which the youth is instructed in the philosophy and religion of his race and caste, and initiated into that caste at the time of puberty. The second period begins at about the age of twenty, when the youth returns from his term of study with a religious or school master to marry a wife of his father's choosing and take up his duties as a householder and member of the social community. Third, comes the period of "forest-dwelling," in which the middle aged man and wife—whose children are now grown, and who are therefore freed from family responsibilities—turn to unselfish community service and a more contemplative life. The fourth and final stage is that of solitary meditation in preparation for the incarnation to come. Actually the third and fourth periods, which might seem to be the goal of the other two, tend in practice to lapse. But the point here is that orthodox Hinduism attaches almost as much religious significance to the householding stage as to any of the others; to be orthodoxly Hindu one must fulfill it acceptably. To beget children and train them in the traditional pattern is a solemn obligation. It was in part because monkish Buddhism could find the way to salvation only in the negation of family duties that Hindu India finally rejected it as a faith.

One of the major events in this religious ordering of the life course is worth examining somewhat more closely: the initiation of the boy into adult society, and his investiture with the sacred cord. The initiation takes place at about the time of puberty. Usually a priest from a nearby temple is called in to assist, especially in the high caste families, and the relatives are frequently present. The rather elaborate ceremonial reaches its climax in the investiture with the sacred cord, which is thereafter worn on the outward clothing as a caste sign.

Everything about the cord and its investiture is symbolical. Before receiving it the youth is technically without caste—or of the very lowest; investiture therefore gives him social status. Hence each caste—except the lowest or Shudra, has its own distinguishing type of cord. Originally the materials may have been different, cotton for the priestly Brahmins, wool for the warrior-ruler Ksatriyas, and linen for the artisan-farmer-merchant Vaisyas. Today they are all woven of cotton, but differ in color—white, red, yellow, in descending order.<sup>2</sup> The cord itself is of a specified length, ninety-six times the breadth of four fingers, or four times a man's height. The number four symbolizes the four meditation states of waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep, and realization of the supreme vision of Brahma. It is three-stranded to symbolize the three-fold nature of man: reality, passion, darkness. The twist of the thread must be upward, so

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson, *Rites of the Twice-Born*, Oxford, 1920, pp. 31–32.



that goodness will predominate; and thrice repeated, so that the element of darkness will not overcome the soul. The whole cord is tied together by a knot called *Brahma-granthi*, which is of three parts to represent the three gods, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Also it must have been spun by a virgin and twisted by a Brahmin.

The cord is put on with ceremonial prayers and the repetition of sacred scripture verses. A staff is presented to the young man, of a specified length and cut from the kind of wood suitable to his caste. The young man's *guru*, or religious teacher and father confessor, whispers into his ear a special sacred verse which is to be his own secret till death; the right ear (into which it is whispered) becomes holy for life. A final part of the ceremony raises the boy to marriageable status, ceremonially speaking. He is now one of the "twice-born" who belong to the three upper castes, a full-fledged member of the adult Hindu social and religious community. Thus are family and caste structures bound firmly together, and the duties of each given a binding religious sanction.

As undisputed head of the household, the father of a family is also the acting head of its religious operations. To his wife he is Guru—father confessor, teacher, example, revered elder, lord. Her social and religious virtue consists in absolute submission to him and in ministering to his desires. She must see no other man but her husband, and—not many years since—was required to burn herself on her husband's funeral pyre if he died first. (This practice, *suttee*, was forbidden by the British.) From her husband the wife will learn all she need know of religion. And the head of the household will be both example and chief officiant in the practice and observance of all its rites and religious regulations.

Since there is no regular public congregational worship in the temples of Hinduism—each worshiper going as and when he pleases to listen to the somewhat regular priestly celebrations of religious rite, or conducting his private devotions by himself—family religion is therefore the more important. Its regular practice under the direction of the head of the household is also financially economical, since a priest must be paid if he is called in to officiate at family affairs. Nevertheless many Hindu families cannot carry on their own rites because of their ignorance of them, and therefore rely on occasional priestly visits for the most essential ones. An increasing number of Hindu families are only very nominally attached to the rituals of their faith.

Ideally, however, the Hindu day is permeated with religious symbolism and meaning, from its beginning to its end, for every member of the family. Ancient usage prescribes that the wife should first arise, anoint the big toe of her husband's right foot, and offer lights and incense as tokens of reverence to him, her lord and master. Most modern Indian women skimp on this, though they

may touch their hand to the husband's foot and then to their own forehead as a token of reverence. When the husband arises, he bathes to achieve religious purity, meanwhile repeating a series of prayers and meditating on the sacred Ganges—if he lives at a distance from it. Following this he reads the scriptures (Vedas), takes various symbolic positions, performs breathing exercises, and repeats the sacred syllable *Aum*. At this time, and at frequent intervals during the day, he should repeat the following invocation to the sun:

*Aum*, earth, sky, heaven, *Aum*.  
Let us meditate upon that excellent vivifier, the  
Light Divine, which enlightens our understanding.

Other ceremonials remain to be performed during the rest of the day. There is the household shrine to be honored. This is a niche in the wall containing an image or a picture; or it may be a sacred basil plant in the courtyard. In a rich household there may be either a resident priest or one called in daily to waken the god, feed him, and pray to him for the household; or else the wife may take such duties on herself (clearly the husband is shirking). The offerings, simple or ornate, consist of a minimum of food or flowers, with repetition of texts and the name of the god. Sometimes the ancestors are honored; and usually before meals and before retiring at night a prayer of "reverent honor," called *Puja*, is offered; this latter custom persists even in the more careless households.

In addition to these prescribed daily rites, any quantity of private devotion and prayer may be added. And there are also some seasonal events: the caste initiation we have described, which lasts two or three days, the marriage sacrament, and the death rites. On these occasions the limited character of the family as a religious unit is observable: outside help in the form of professional priests is called in, for even the pious father has not sufficient religious resources for such a task.

## 2. *The Roman Familia*

The Roman *familia*, strictly speaking, is not just a biological unit, such as we have been observing in Hinduism. Such a unit was often its core, but the term itself applied to a householding unit that might include one or more biological family units plus servants. It was part of the larger group known as the *gens* or clan group to which the masters of the *familiae* belonged. The religious pattern followed here was therefore something of a halfway house between the family and the clan observance. Historically it probably represented the prevalent form of religious observance before the city-state and empire religions made their way into Italy. And even after these developed their classic public forms the household continued its more intimate form of observances—especially in



the country districts—as a supplement to the public variety.

*Familia* religion centered at the hearth, which was revered as the dwelling place of Vesta, the guardian goddess of the household. She was honored each day by a short silence and/or the throwing of a piece of sacred salt cake into the fire. There were other and lesser spirits to be honored as well: the Penates, who were guardians of the household storehouse; the spirit of the doorway—perhaps the early form of two-faced Janus, who later became guardian of many a city's gates; and the Lares, who were the guardians of the productive power of the household estate. In early days the Lares were honored as "boundary gods" soon after the winter solstice in a gay festival that included the slaves and was performed with animal and vegetable sacrifices.

Family events were of course of particular religious importance, and each had its appropriate ceremonial. Marriage called for smearing the door posts of the married couple's dwelling with wolf's fat and oil, and the winding of woolen strands about the door posts on the bride's first entrance, as well as the marriage ritual itself. The birth of a child called for its protection against evil spirits by striking the threshold with axe, pestle, and broom of twigs, and the child's purification on the ninth day. After a death in the family, various rites were undertaken to prevent the malignant disembodied spirits from returning to harm the household. One of these—carried on into the Roman public festival of Lemuria in the month of May—required the head of the *familia*, among other things, to foil the threatening ghosts by spitting black beans from his mouth and saying nine times: "With these I redeem me and mine."<sup>3</sup> Such folk religion, with its greater intimacy and personal warmth, was probably never entirely displaced by any of the public festivals, no matter how imposing or widespread their observance.

### 3. Summary

Although the family was an important center for religious observances in these and other cultures, its inherent limitations as a religious unit are obvious. For one thing, the small family unit, despite its difference from every other type of social unit and its unique personal values, in many cultures has not been able to maintain an independent economic status. In fact, this is possible as a rule only where the scale of living is relatively luxurious. The more usual pattern has been that of the clan-family which the Chinese perfected in one form. And on the higher levels of economic attainment, where the family unit has been able to achieve economic independence, its importance as a cultural unit

<sup>3</sup> W. Warde Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People*, Macmillan, 1911, p. 85.

has declined. Both increasing individualism within the family group, and the pressure of culture patterns from without, break open the closed compartment of family culture, and hence weaken both its social and religious significance.

There are also other limiting factors in the situation. One is inherent in the family structure itself. It is only a short time in years till children are grown, or some member of the family group is removed by death; hence the religious continuity is somewhat broken, unless the biological family is a member of a larger and more stable religious unit. This is indeed necessarily the case, for the family can be neither economically nor culturally self-sufficient in actual practice. It is embedded in the midst of a vaster social life and greater tradition, which provide wider references and a more adequate scale of values than the family itself can encompass. So too when the growth of culture and science remove the family from its close contact with the natural seasonal rhythms—with which the family cycle is often connected—the latter becomes more and more artificial.

The family group as a religious center, therefore, is a minor and relatively temporary form of the religious community, suited to a passing social phase; because of its inherent limitations it cannot remain a permanently significant religious group. But its temporary association with religion during some periods of religious history was of mutual benefit: religion, because of such association, found in its structure a place for the more intimate and personal social values, and society learned that it must safeguard the family structure with some permanent religious values and sanctions for its (society's) own welfare.



## Chapter XIV

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### CLAN AND KINSHIP RELIGIOUS GROUPS

The kinship groups—also called clans or sibs—are an attempt to extend the familial type of relationship to a wider and more permanent basis in society and culture than it is possible for the biological family unit to achieve. Though the biological family unit plays a central role in the clan unit, serving as its basic building block, the temporary quality we have observed in it constitutes a threat to social (and religious) continuity. This weakness the clan type of grouping seeks to remedy, without losing the close-binding blood ties of the smaller unit.

The practical advantages of any social unit based on kinship factors are obvious. For instance, such a grouping provides a regulatory apparatus for marriage, since members of the same clan may not ordinarily marry each other. It also provides an orderly system of property distribution and inheritance and a somewhat systematic economic arrangement for the community. The Tanala tribe of Madagascar, for instance, has evolved a patriarchal community in which the original *paterfamilias* governs his descendants to the second and third generation. His authority is passed on to the eldest son. The family unit of sons and their wives and their immediate descendants work the common acreage, putting the larger part of the produce into the patriarch's storehouse. The patriarch is therefore a resource in time of need for the whole community; and incidentally he thereby maintains his authority over it, until one of the sons breaks away to form his own group.<sup>1</sup>

Obvious and important as are the economic advantages of the clan system, they are scarcely the vital center of the clan as a social organism. The real centers of kinship groups are the kinship factor of blood relationship, and the traditional and religious meanings that find expression in the clan life; these cultural factors are actually the most fundamental of all the forces that hold the clan life together—even the blood tie is often interpreted in their context, rather than vice versa. And economic advantages are incidental or almost unconscious by-products of the cultural-kinship grouping.

<sup>1</sup> Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man*, Appleton-Century, 1936, pp. 189 ff.

The tangible motif about which clan structure is built is usually that of blood relationship—whatever the vital center of the group. Many clan groups extend this sense of family relationship to the far reaches of distant cousinship, and call all other members of this extended group “brother,” “sister,” “father,” or “mother,” and refer to all wives as “wife.” Some of the kinship groups in China acknowledge relationship to an unbelievably distant degree, whole regional groups using the same surname and acknowledging with practical helpfulness their “kinship” with journeying members from far distant places. And we are all well aware that most Jews consider themselves to have descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, though the lines of inclusion in the community are often religious rather than racial; in any case the combination gives the Jewish group both a strong sense of common ancestry and community of interest.

To be sure, there are many other instances in which kinship appears to be little more than the merest symbol of cultural and religious unity. Thus the Japanese have a mythological account of their descent from the gods via a specially selected human pair, and their emperor is accorded a very specialized version of the same. Nor are they alone among peoples who have claimed descent from the gods; such a claim is frequent in the history of culture. And even though the ancestral connection is more fable than fact, and the connection of blood relationship anything but intimate, it is interesting to note that it seems worth while to attempt to extend the kinship tie as far as possible. The obvious hope is that the sentiments of natural affection attaching to the immediate biological family may be diffused over a wider area in order to retain the values of intimate personal relationships, plus the additional values of the greater solidity and permanence of the larger group.

The nature of the clan group makes it a natural locus for such hopes—it is the inevitable center of religious values and practices; it is in fact a much more permanent and successful religious group than the biological family. This is in part because, in the nature of the case, the clan is far more permanent as a social group than the family. Also it can take the family rites conducted at birth, puberty, marriage, death, and in the honoring of ancestors, and put them into the wider scale of its own cult and social organization. As a more permanent repository of tradition—as capable of a more solemn and grander celebration of those rites—the clan can be a more effective educator of youth. Indeed, the addition of uncles and cousins to the family social structure, supports in most ways rather than weakens or displaces the biological family structure and enlarges its meanings without destroying its values.

We shall observe three interesting variations of clan or kinship religion from as many parts of the earth. These are the ancestral cult of the Dahomey tribes-



men of Africa; the *rites de passage* of the Australian Arunta; and the Hopi Indian clan structure and ritual.

### 1. *The Dahomey*

Popularly the Chinese are thought of as the supreme and perhaps unique exemplars of ancestor worship. While theirs has indeed been a classical example—a modification of which we shall observe in the next chapter—they are by no means its only practitioners. In fact, the Dahomean peoples of West Africa have built their total culture about their ancestral cult, and have made it a religion to a degree surpassing even the Chinese.<sup>2</sup>

Dahomeans look upon the ancestral spirits of the dead as gods, for all practical purposes. To be sure there are other gods than ancestors, acknowledged by some of the clans, called sky gods. But even where such gods are acknowledged, the recognition and service given them is both vague and perfunctory; they are scarcely competitors for the loyalty of the Dahomey, save perhaps for two clans who seem to have nothing to do with ancestral spirits. But for the overwhelming number of clans nearly all their time, attention, honor, and ritual are expended in the worship of the ancestral spirits; if there are other gods, never mind—the ancestral spirits are the most important and active forces affecting tribal welfare. Therefore the Dahomey have built their entire social structure about the funeral rites and deification ceremonies, which, in honoring the ancestors and making place for them in village life, give significance to the total culture.

For the Dahomey the importance of right relations with the ancestors is obvious and paramount: the presently existing sib (clan group) can be perpetuated only if the proper ancestor worship is scrupulously carried out. By such ritual those who have died are retained as living and active members of the community, even though invisible. If they are not thus bound into the living community, they are lost somewhere in the vague reaches of outer spiritual space; and the living community, beset with hazards on every hand, cannot afford this diminution of spiritual force—it must needs have its total spiritual resources constantly available in order to maintain itself.

The two main ritual structures, the deification and the funeral, are too intricate to describe in any detail; they can only be very generally characterized here. The ceremonials are conducted by clan heads, the “best friend” of the deceased—a sort of fraternity and blood brother—and by special priests. They are characterized by long and often-repeated patterns of dancing, singing, drumming, and the offering of animal sacrifices, lasting for days on end.

<sup>2</sup> Materials and quotes taken from *The Dahomey*, Melville J. Herskovits, J. J. Augustin, 1938, Vol. I, Chaps. 11, 12.

The deification ceremonial, in which the ancestral spirits are called back soon after death and established in the central place of worship as their permanent home in the community, is an event of major moment. Though it is supposed to occur every three years before the dead may be too far strayed from the living, the expense of it is so great that it actually occurs very infrequently. One can understand this when he knows that

For every soul deified there must be two yards of cotton, a chicken, and much liquor. In addition . . . seven castrated goats, seven cocks, seven she-goats, and seven chickens are provided,<sup>3</sup>

and that no one—not even a still-born child—is to be omitted. When there has been a long interval between deifications, the number of souls to be deified and the outlay therefor are obviously considerable.

The establishment of the place of ancestral abode and the dedication of it as also a place of worship in a local village—which is the final outcome of the ceremonial—is of prime importance to the Dahomey. All intermediate rites and funeral provisions point toward this. And once established in a village, this abode of the ancestral spirits becomes the center of village life, the vital source of all its spiritual hopes, the soul of its corporate existence. To it the spirits can be called back on public occasions and feted with songs, dancing, and food. In between times it is a physical reminder of the presence of those who stand a little beyond the veil of death. The dead and the living are no longer separated, and each member of the clan may think of this hopefully as he chants the doleful funeral song:

O death! thou killest without a trial,  
One day I will see him again,  
Yes, one day I will see him again,  
For I, too, am going toward death.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. *Clan Rites de Passage*

The concern of the clan with events that belong to the biological circle of interests is best seen in what have been termed *rites de passage*, that is, transitional rites. The rituals are those that cluster about birth, physical maturity, marriage, and death, and are to be found all the way up the scale of religions from the primitive level to the lower levels of national religion. And, as we have noted earlier, even highly developed religions celebrate them—though sometimes in very attenuated form.

Such rites give expression to the conviction that each of the above events is

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 372.



a time at which one's status as a person is radically changed. Birth is the individual's entrance into an earthly life; sexual maturity brings mysterious personal changes; marriage initiates a new relationship and its responsibilities; and death is the culminating transition from the partly known to the completely mysterious unknown. At such transitional times, reasons the primitive, man is vulnerable to many dangers and malign influences; both for his own and society's sake he must be protected by abundant ritual.

Though these events center in the personal life of the individual, the group's interest in them can be clearly understood. The group is solicitous that the individual should safely enter its life as a strength-giving member—his safety and strength are the safety and strength of the group. And, conversely, the group must be protected from the individual: the individual may jeopardize the group's welfare, either by his weakness as an individual or by his neglect of group customs and taboos; failure in either connection may adversely alter the group's relations to the superhuman powers. Therefore the group in self-interest undertakes the regulation of many of these transitional periods and constructs its own elaborate ritual about each.

We have chosen for illustration here the rites surrounding the arrival at puberty by males among the very primitive Australian Arunta. Parallel rites might be found among many other groups, though the detailed observances here described are peculiar to the Arunta. They consist of three or four long-drawn-out stages, consuming the major part of group energy over many weeks, and include as the rule the following series of steps: (1) initiation ceremonial, (2) circumcision, (3) head-biting, (4) subincision, and (5) totem-initiation ceremonial. In all these rites women take a minor part, but the most secret ritual features are hidden from them. The final object of this series of ceremonial events is the proper initiation of the boy into full clan membership and adult responsibility.<sup>5</sup>

The first of the ceremonies is the simplest, and easiest to endure. The initiates, boys of ten to twelve years of age, previously painted with designs on their bare backs, are picked up by groups of men and tossed into the air several times, being caught as they descend. They are told that this will help them grow up, and that they are no longer to live among women and children. As this occurs the women dance about the group. When it is over the initiate is allowed to wear the nose bone, which is inserted through an incision in the central partition below the nostril openings.

Some time later small groups of the boys are carried out of the camp for the circumcision ceremonial. This is an elaborate affair, performed in a prepared location, and partly screened from the women. After considerable ceremonial,

<sup>5</sup> The materials here are from Spencer, B., and Gillen, F. J., *The Arunta*, Macmillan, 1928, Vol. I, Chaps. 9-11.

the boys are taken still further out into the bush, in the dark, by older men, who perform the circumcision with crude stone knives, while others whirl the *churinga* or bull-roarers about. After the operation the boy is embraced by the men and told "You are a proper man," shown the secret of the bull-roarer—with dire warnings not to reveal it to the women—and kept in the bush till his wound is healed. He may then return to camp, where he lives now on the men's side.

A further word might be said about the *churinga* or bull-roarer. It is a totem symbol, perhaps the nearest thing to an explicit religious symbol in the Arunta life. It is a flat, oblong piece of some hard material, varying in size, and containing symbolic markings. Each person has his or her personal *churinga*, stored in a secret place known only to the old men, and never seen by the women. The *churinga* supposedly contains the power of the ancestral totem spirit, handed down through successive ages, and reinvesting each new one as it is made. The smaller ones are tied to strings at one end and whirled about during the circumcision with a resulting buzzing or roaring noise, which, the women are told, is the spirit Twanyirrika, who has borne the initiate away to his abode for a time.

Some time later the head-biting ceremonial takes place. The adult men bite the initiate's scalp or chin till the blood comes. This painful ordeal is calculated to increase the growth of hair on the body, and lead in general to greater maturity. Still later the subincision operation takes place, in which the penis is slit longitudinally on the under side clear into the urethra, accompanied by the same general ceremonial as circumcision. When the women at the distant camp hear the sound of the bull-roarers they must gash themselves on the breast. When he is healed, the initiate—now a fully adult male—returns to the camp, is publicly presented to the encampment, and as a final gesture of independence throws his boomerang in the supposed direction of the hiding-place of his mother's *churinga*.

Sooner or later all men go through the final Engwurra or totemic ceremonial. This important ceremonial may last for several months, including in its course several *corroborees* (an orgiastic type of tribal get-together), with much singing and dancing along the way. The initiates come in for considerable special attention. They are separated from the main camp, fast for part of the period, and are several times shown the *churingas*, with the strongest cautions to secrecy. The height of the physical ordeal is the ordeal by fire, in which the women throw burning leaves and branches on the heads of the initiates; the latter must also lie on burning fires for four or five minutes, protected only by a screen of green leaves. The *corroboree* ends with the painting of the totemic



emblem on the back of each initiate, and in a series of dances that terminate in a rather promiscuous sexual orgy.

At last the initiate is a full-fledged man in every sense of the word. He may choose a wife, or take the one already chosen but not yet lived with. He knows the secret of the bull-roarer and the ceremonials. He knows how to co-operate with the totemic powers. He can now sit at the men's councils, though his discretion must be proved further before he will be shown the secret hiding-place of the *churingas*.

Such *rites de passage* tend to fade away as specific transitional rituals, or radically to change their nature. Puberty ceremonial has almost disappeared in many societies, or taken a nearly unrecognizable form; birth, marriage, and death ceremonial have been taken over by the more developed religions and given new and different significances. And though interest in those experiences that underlie the *rites de passage* has scarcely lessened among mankind to the present day, we can say that these rites as they are celebrated in primitive society belong primarily to the small, clan-size group, the simple society, and to a way of life that is closely bound to the cycles of natural and family events as its major dimensions.

### 3. *The Hopi Supernaturalist Clan*

Our last example is from the Hopi clan structure, whose ceremonial patterns we have already observed. The clan functions as the social base on which Hopi life is built, and is of interest here for its religious implications.

The Hopi kinship line is traced primarily on the mother's side; and each maternal clan supposedly had a common ancestress in prehistoric times who is called the Clan Mother. (She has her representative in the actual clan structure in the person of an elder woman of the clan who is the currently acting clan mother.) Men marrying women from this clan are thenceforth social and economic members of it, often taking up residence in its dwellings, though they visit their own clan or society for ceremonial purposes.

But the clan is not merely a social arrangement; for the ruling clan mother is also the mistress of the clan house, in which are kept the sacred emblems and clan fetish. This fetish is usually symbolical of the totem animal or plant, or may be an object that has given the clan its name, as in the case of the Bow Clan. The clan mother guards and "nourishes" the totem, and her brother or nearest male relative acts as head of the clan during ceremonials.

The clans are also joined together in brotherhoods that are often more important to the Hopi than the blood clan. These brotherhoods take their names from nonhuman, or superhuman, beings that symbolize the nature and history of the clan. This name is usually a compound affair, which includes (ideally) a

species of plant or animal (the brotherhood totem), a physical object or natural element, and a deity or deity symbol. These brotherhood groups are closely associated with the ceremonial cycles, and are responsible for the periodic observance of their particular clan ritual. As examples we may note that there are the Waterhouse and Rain-Corn-Frog brotherhoods associated with the corn-growth cycle; the Sun-Moon-Stars-Eagle-Hawk-Turkey group, related to ceremonial cycles having to do with the above or zenith direction; and also the Bear-Spider-Bluebird-Carrying-Strap brotherhood, which has an explanatory myth about its name, according to which each of the animals mentioned helped the clan ancestors on their original journey to Hopi-Land many, many years ago.

Despite its tenacity among certain primitive or near-primitive societies and with the possible exception of China, the clan or kinship group has not preserved its religious or social significance as a permanent part of the world's major and expanding cultures. It is found as a vital social force mainly at the level of less-developed cultural groups. The rise of larger political and social units, and a consequent alteration of every phase of life, has resulted in other organizations of individuals, along racial and national lines, for example, rather than clan groupings. And the religious functions of the clan have been taken over either by the national group or by the specifically religious society.



## Chapter XV

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### COMMUNITY RELIGION

The family and kinship groups with which we have thus far dealt have an actual or presumed blood relationship as a natural basis; around this natural focus significant religious groupings have also been built, as we have seen. The grouping to which we now turn has for the most part a different basis—that of geographical proximity. The groups we deal with here are groups primarily because they live close together; they correspond to modern neighborhoods in a city, or to a village community. They have at times achieved a religious significance in the history of mankind, and as such make interesting studies in the group characteristics of religion.

This type of religious grouping has not been as widely prevalent as the kinship groupings; nor has it always been entirely separate from them. In the ancient world—or in parts of the modern world as yet technically undeveloped—travel was not frequent or extended, so that geographical groups might also be kinship groups as well as self-enclosed cultural units. Such is the case with our example from the Chinese culture.

Yet over and above the possible clan interconnections, community interests have sometimes developed their own peculiar expression. In the Chinese group the community and kinship values constantly intermingle, yet are not identical. But in the Greek city-state, which we shall also survey, the two were largely separate. Religion was carried on as a community function pure and simple, with little or no regard for family lines. There have been also a few cases in which the god or gods of a city have become those of a whole empire by virtue of military conquest, as with Assyria and Rome; but here we shall confine ourselves strictly to the local variety of community religion.

#### 1. *Chinese Clan-Village Religion*

The Chinese version of community religion is of particular interest, because it embodies the overlapping, or coincidence, of clan and community roles in its social, economic, and religious life. We have here a hybrid or transitional form,

not much different in some respects from the Dahomey ancestor-worshipping community, yet with its own peculiar Chinese characteristics and possessing perhaps more of a community consciousness. Here is a combination of several levels of kinship units, each serving specific biological, economic, and social purposes, but all united in a communal-ancestral pattern of religious observances.

The general pattern of ancestor worship, as it was carried on rather uniformly at all levels in China, from the great public festivals down to the family observance, is somewhat familiar to the West. The basic conception on which all the ritual is founded—and which serves also as a principle of social organization—is twofold: one, the continued existence and activity of the spirits of one's ancestors; two, the superior honor due to the aged. (It should be said that "ancestor" usually means "male ancestor.") In ancestor worship—or ancestor reverence, as it might fittingly be termed—two motivations may thus complement each other: the desire to fulfill the traditional duty of the son or younger member of the family group to the elder members, even those who have now passed beyond the earthly family group but are still the senior members of it; and secondly (a motive common to all cultures that honor the ancestors), the desire to maintain the best of relationships with the ancestral spirits, lest they harm the living community on earth. On the clan-community scale ancestors are commonly honored only as far back as the third generation, except once or twice a year when the more remote ancestors may also be remembered. It is assumed that beyond this point the spirits are absorbed into some outer anonymous spirit world.

One of the most essential pieces of apparatus for this worship is the ancestral tablet or spirit throne for the "guest on high." This tablet, often made of wood, is of two parts fitted together, both of which fit into a base that holds them upright. On it are written biographical data concerning the deceased, including date of birth, honors accorded, positions held, and date of death. It is not thought that the ancestral spirit constantly lives in the tablet, for it is conceived to be active and independent in its comings and goings, but only that on feast occasions it may deign to be present near the tablet.

In former times there was a "personator"—usually a grandson of the deceased—who visibly signified the presence of the ancestral spirits at the ceremonial by entering the ancestral hall first, being seated at the front, and remaining there throughout the long, elaborate rituals. To him was presented a portion of the raw meat of the offered animal before it was cooked; he was honored at various points in the ceremony, and finally escorted from the hall with drums and flute when he signified that the ancestral spirits had eaten and drunk their fill. In later years the personator has dropped out of sight, though sometimes



the ancestors have a "representative" symbolically present in the person of one of the elder men; and increasingly the satisfaction of the ancestral spirits in the sacrifices offered them is interpreted spiritually rather than physically.

The type of sacrifice offered depended mostly on the wealth of the worshipping group and the social level of the observance. In the great civic or national sacrifices, bulls and lesser animals (oxen, goats, and pigs) were offered in great number, along with the usual libations of wine. In the family or small-community observance, dogs and fowls might be used for the animal sacrifice. The fat of the carcase was usually burned as an offering to the spirits, the meat then roasted, and a portion of it "presented" before the ancestral tablets or paintings of the ancestors hanging in the hall for the occasion; this was accomplished with elaborate ceremonial words, bowings, and honors. Finally, when all the ceremonial usage had been fulfilled, the remainder of the meat and wine was consumed by the worshipers in a communal feast.

Such was the general pattern of ancestral worship that has been so important in Chinese culture. We may now observe a little more narrowly how it operated at the village level. An interesting study of the village of Phenix in South China was made in the '20's,<sup>1</sup> in which we can observe how the economic, biological, social, and religious factors all mingled in the clan-community group and mutually supported each other. There were four recognized and functioning family groupings to be found in this village: (1) the biological parent-children unit; (2) the economic family, which might coincide with a unit of the first type or include several of them; (3) the sib or kinship group, which included the whole village in this case and was signified by a common surname; and (4) the branch or religious-family group.

Every level except the economic family group carried on religious observances of the general type sketched above. Since the economic family group sometimes coincided in membership with the biological family group, however, its actual membership might thus come to participate as a unit in worship even if this social grouping as such had no specific religious function. The scale of observance of ancestral rites is, of course, graded in elaborateness to the level at which the observance takes place; the larger the group, the grander the scale, and likewise the less frequent. For example, the tablets of the ancestors of the smallest family group (parent-child) may be kept in their dwelling and honored very simply from day to day or week to week by short prayers, honorific words, or reverent inclinations of the head, and with bits of food—much different in quality and quantity from the complex public rites.

From this level on up there was a progressively more elaborate ceremonial.

<sup>1</sup> D. H. Kulp, *Country Life in South China*, Columbia University Press, 1925, Chaps. VI, X.

A number of small ancestral halls were scattered through the community, in which the groups that included all those relatives up to a degree or two of cousinship might meet periodically for worship. Then there were two larger halls in which the village's two major ancestral divisions met as groups for the honoring of the common ancestors of each. At least once a year in these latter halls the respective kinship groups met for a most elaborate set of ceremonies, in charge of the proper ritual official (*chiachang*) and various other village leaders. Somewhat according to age and prominence, all the members of the group made their obeisance and uttered the proper words of reverence for their respective ancestors. One of their number, who was perhaps the successor of the ancient personator, represented the ancestors; he indicated that they had accepted the honors offered, and in return gave such and such counsel. And, finally, at the top of the ladder was the largest of all the ancestral halls, which a caretaker family used as a dwelling, and in which only very occasionally the total village met for purposes of worship, to honor the far-off ancestors who had given the whole village its common surname.

Thus the whole community was bound together by ties of economic need, biological relationship, and a common cult of ancestor worship; but of all these the last was the most essential. Its importance for the Phenix community has been thus characterized:

Ancestral worship links the living with the spiritual community. In this dual community blood determines membership, status, obligations, rights and practices just as it does in the living community when considered separately. And yet Phenix village apart from the spirits of the ancestors does not exist. The living community derives its very *esprit de corps* as well as its external expressions . . . from a vital connection with the spiritual and historical community.<sup>2</sup>

And what is true for Phenix is in general true for all China. The reverencing of their ancestors has made more religious sense to the Chinese of many generations than any other faith that has been presented to them. For though China has many temples in which Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian ancestral styles of worship are mingled, somewhat indiscriminately, it has been the vital sense of social community within the family and kinship group, both present and past, and best expressed by ancestor worship, which has been the living soul of Chinese society.

## 2. *Greek City-State and Village Religion*

Pre-Alexandrian Greek religion furnishes us with our other example of community religion. It was a more truly communal type than the Chinese clan

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.



community, because here family relationships played no essential part—only the geographical fact of a community with common interests. Presumably the inhabitants of a village might have been mostly cousins to each other, but nothing was made of the fact in the religious observances.

The Greek community is reasonably well-known as a political and social unit in the form of the city-state; but we are not as well acquainted, as a rule, with its role as a religious force. We have thought of Greek religion predominantly as in some sort a national one, whose fabled gods—Zeus, Hera, Apollo, Athena, and the rest—were the possession of all Greeks from time immemorial. But such a conception grows out of the Homeric and later classical literature; it is for the most part a literary artifact, rather than an actual historical entity.

Far more than we often realize, the local motif predominated in the real workings of Greek religion. The *local* shrine—whether the only one in a village or one of several similar neighborhood institutions in a city—was of paramount interest to the Greek. For until the time of its empire—and even to a considerable extent then—Greece was a group of Greek-speaking communities rather than a nation. Accordingly, each local shrine had its own peculiar customs and special deities, which it was not anxious to merge with those of any other community, or to blend completely with any national religion, however excellent.

There is indeed considerable evidence to point to the conclusion that the major gods of Greek civilization were first local gods, then later unified under the same name or function. The all-Greek form of worship found in the literature of Homer, and the public patterns of the Greek empire period, were essentially an amalgam of older local customs and rites, with a certain added nationalistic gloss and enlargement. In Athens and vicinity, for example, there were at least fifteen different names given to Artemis, the sister of Apollo; "Artemis" served as a surname for them all, as Artemis Hecate, Artemis Agrotera, and so on; but each shrine name for her indicated a special aspect under which she was worshiped—patroness of hunting, wild life, seaports, and so forth. Probably "Artemis" was added to the names of local goddesses during the period of Greek nationalism, though the older names and characteristics also remained from former local usage as part of the final product.

It was probably the same with local shrine usages as with the names of gods: a general superficial uniformity growing out of the increasing unity of culture, but containing within it many local customs still intact. Thus there was in almost every community the honorary civic procession, with its ceremonial feast and votive offering, which had something of the all-Greek flavor and included national motifs; but the shrine itself was under local management, and maintained many of its own peculiar observances. In later Greek times the state took

a sympathetic interest in local shrine worship; and sometimes state officials would attend as honorary participants. There was no state department of religion, however; such visits were merely friendly gestures, and in no sense supervisory.

This thoroughly local character of Greek religion was evidenced, for example, in the community's choice of sacred seasons to be observed. If the national agricultural deities were to be honored, Apollo as a patron of growing crops, Demeter of the grain, or Dionysius of the vine, the days varied from community to community. There were also celebrations of local anniversaries, such as the founding of a town, or a special local manifestation by some god or goddess. Most towns had their own patron deity, with special celebrations attached; Athens as the cultural center accumulated one each of practically every deity in Greece. Some fifty days during the year were thus set aside for religious ceremonial, and nearly every other day was dedicated to some god or other, who might be honored by those so inclined.

The further characteristic of Greek religion besides its local nature was its civic quality. The priesthood in a community was a civic function as much as a religious one; or, perhaps better, the two were one in Greek thinking. The priest in charge was a civic leader, rather than an ecclesiastical official, whose duty was to oversee and conduct the local religious observances, neither more nor less. Priests and priestesses might be elected by the people annually, purchase the office, or be appointed by the ruler of the area as a social honor. Sometimes priests were chosen rather regularly from local aristocratic families, but the office was seldom hereditary; the term might be for a year or for life. No special training was required, no great degree of self-denial was called for even while in office; nor did any special sanctity attach to the priest except while performing his offices. For the rest he was an honored but plain and ordinary citizen.

The worship itself had the qualities of a community festival. The great occasions were marked by processions, feasting, public worship, dramatics, and athletics; the civic leaders often took part in such festivities as representatives of the secular community. The purpose of such festivities was to insure the continued prosperity of the community: prayers and offerings were designed to ward off evil and propitiate gods who might possibly be offended, to remind the gods of past favors done to them through public honors and rich offerings, and to bind them to future favorable action by praise and new offerings. Occasionally—as after the victory over the Persians at Salamis—special services of universal thanksgiving were held. There was also much private use of the shrines for individual offerings and bargainings with the gods. But the main



character of the Greek shrine worship is as we have indicated—a community-centered religious observance.

The mutual benefits to community and religious institutions under this geographical form of religious grouping are obviously much the same as with the clan: a strengthening of each through the common bonds of interest and concern. As long as the community was a going concern of distinctive character, a significant basis for the religious expression of its life existed; but the geographical community, like the family and clan, suffered from limitations that made it a transitory type of religious society. The increase of communications, and new political tides and economic forces, broke the isolation of the local group and led to its incorporation into larger social units. Universalizing influences intruded, both in culture and religion, which the local cult could not exclude or withstand. Hence it either passed away altogether or persisted for a time as a local variation of a more universal faith. It was at best a very temporary form of religious expression, suited to a particular stage of culture somewhere above the primitive and somewhere below the national level.

## Chapter XVI

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### RACIAL-NATIONAL RELIGIONS

The racial and national groups to which we now turn might well be looked upon as enlarged clans or kinship groups—especially in some of their smaller units. And perhaps the distinction should not in any event be made too sharply; Judaism, for instance, is a case where race, nation, and kinship have been almost identical in meaning, especially during some historical periods. Yet when the terms “racial” and “national”—sometimes the same, sometimes different in scope—are used, we have most often in mind such a degree of enlargement of the smaller group that the peculiar kinship values of intimate association are largely lost. Even as small a group as the Jewish becomes too large to be called longer a family group or clan unit, although it may call Abraham its ancestral “father.” And despite the fact that a nation is frequently of one predominant race, this is by no means uniformly true; nations have also been biological composites. Yet as political unities they have sometimes developed a religion that owed little or nothing to kinship or racial notions.

Our use of the terms “race” and “nation” cannot then be too precise; anthropologically there are no pure races. We shall use that term here to indicate only general physical similarities, and perhaps some degree of blood relationship. And a nation can be no more closely defined, as we saw earlier, than to say that it is a relatively large and stable social unit, frequently of a predominant racial strain and language, and representing some sort of political unity. Here we shall deal with some cases in which the nation has been a religious unity as well.

We have already dealt with national religion as a stage in the historical development of religion. Here we shall consider the way in which the racial-political and religious unities coincide, and examine three forms of such groups from among the many that have existed, namely: Egypt, Israel, and Japan. Each of the three has its unique quality. Egypt was primarily an economic and political unity that expressed its religion in those terms; Israel began as a small, aggressive racial group, but early moralized and universalized its religious experience; Japanese Shinto is a sheer nationalism that has rather deliberately



been given religious form.<sup>1</sup> But in all of them the form and continued existence of the political-racial group have been consistently of the utmost concern; consequently religious thought and observances have been uniformly cast in the national mold.

### 1. *Egyptian Religion: The State Is Divine*<sup>2</sup>

In the Egypt of 2000-600 B.C. the authority of the state was very largely centered in the sovereign or Pharaoh. He was absolute, and his absoluteness extended to all levels of society. He was looked upon as the actual owner of the whole country and everything and everybody in it. Trading was a state monopoly. "Private" property was only such by special royal grant, and its uses were supervised by the Pharaoh's agents. Though there was a complete hierarchy of political organization from top to bottom, each of the state functionaries, at whatever level, was considered to derive his power directly from the sovereign. An inscription on an official's tomb puts it thus:

What is the King of Upper and Lower Egypt? He is a god by whose dealings one lives, the father and mother of all men, alone by himself without an equal.<sup>3</sup>

Yet this absolutism was no mere irresponsible personal power-apparatus; the heart of it was religious. The sovereign was supreme not merely in his own right or as a person, but as the inheritor of a divinely established office. Egyptian mythology tells us that the throne of the Pharaoh is co-eternal with the heavens; it has their majesty and eternal quality. The goddess Maat, goddess of right, order, and justice, is incarnated in each sovereign by virtue of his sitting on the divine throne.

The personal qualities of the sovereign were therefore unimportant; it was the office, not the man, which was honored and served. Indeed, this curiously impersonal quality runs through all descriptions of the gods themselves, as well as ascriptions to the Pharaohs; change the name and the same ascriptions can be applied to a dozen different ones. The structure of the state, its sovereign, its religion, its gods, and the order of nature were a vast monolith, with no seams or divisions anywhere; they were all of the same eternal substance. To quote:

The social order was part of the cosmic order. All theological schools agreed that

<sup>1</sup> There is no suggestion here that any racial group is inherently characterized by any special religious qualities, or lack of them. Such qualities are a matter of cultural, not biological, inheritance.

<sup>2</sup> The interpretation here is that set forth by Henri Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, Columbia University Press, 1948.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

kingship, the pivot of society, belonged to the basic order of existence and had been introduced at the time of creation.<sup>4</sup>

The Egyptian sovereign therefore scarcely ever faced the dangers of internal revolt. His sovereignty was the very essence of divinity; service of the sovereign and the state, at any level from garbage collector to highest high priest, was therefore essentially a religious service. The Egyptian way of life was cosmically guaranteed and attuned so to speak. And the long centuries of relative security and internal peace fastened this monolithic pattern of social-religious solidarity ever more firmly on Egyptian society, until the state itself was shattered by outside forces. Then the Egyptian religion as a coherent whole was broken into bits—though some of its gods and goddesses (Isis and Osiris) lived some years longer as orphans in foreign climes.

## 2. *Judaism: We Are the Chosen People*

The Hebrew-Jewish pattern is more familiar to us by virtue of its Old Testament portraiture. Its character was far more flexible and dynamic than the Egyptian; not only was it able to survive military defeat and the deportation of most of its leaders in the 6th century B.C., but also a continuous series of dispersions and persecutions in the nineteen centuries of the Christian era. It was altered in the course of its tempestuous history into a religion of world significance. It gave birth to another world religion in Christianity; and it strongly influenced the character of still a third, Islam, being to it a sort of unwilling godfather.

✓ The basic conviction that has enabled the Jewish faith to survive all vicissitudes is its belief in the destiny of the Jewish people: they are a chosen people. This ingrained self-consciousness is written across nearly every page of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. Even the early Christian Church called itself the *New Israel*. And though the final editing of the Old Testament occurred long centuries after the beginnings of Hebrew history, by which time the chosen-people idea had been fully developed, there is no good reason to doubt its presence to some degree from almost the very commencement of that history. To be sure, Jewish religion is not unique in its consciousness of a special relation to its God; nearly all religions, whether nationalist or not, have something of this; and other national groups besides the Jews have considered themselves to be favorites of their gods. Yet the form in which this sense of being divinely favored has appeared in Judaism has been uniquely persistent, and its consequences unusual. As no other people in history, the Jews have maintained their unity as a group against unbelievable odds and fantastic persecutions. And the

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.



core of their enduring unity has been the strong conviction of their divine election (choice) as a people for a very special destiny.

The Old Testament portrayal of this consciousness of the Divine Choice as a special people to carry out God's purposes in the world, projects it back in history into the mental furniture of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—those somewhat legendary figures. There may be a valid historical kernel of truth here; but the definite historical appearance of this conviction is at the time of Moses, 1200 B.C. or thereabouts. Moses' great accomplishment was to weld his scattered people into a unity on the basis of a religious covenant made between them and the God Who had chosen them. The basic Ten Commandments are probably the first form of that covenant at Sinai, in which the people promised to serve Jehovah and Him alone, in return for which service He would protect them and enable them to fulfill their destiny.

It was this sense of a divinely ordained destiny and pledged loyalty to it that held the group together through the ensuing crises. It unified them sufficiently to enable them to impose their religion and social pattern on the Canaanites, whose land had been "promised" them by Jehovah. It provided a sense of unity sufficient to carry the community through the period of the united and divided kingdoms, through the destruction of Jerusalem and the ensuing Exile, to the re-establishment of the Jewish community in Palestine by Nehemiah and Ezra. And it was the hope of the final fulfillment of the Divine promises to the chosen people that preserved the scattered Jewish communities through many centuries of persecution even till the present, replete with its own new threats to Jewish existence.

Obviously the form in which this destiny was successively conceived has changed considerably with the centuries. In Canaanite times there was only one goal: to take over the Promised Land, *i.e.*, Palestine, from its possessors. As the rosy dreams of large political domain faded, and the small Hebrew kingdoms were time and again crushed to earth by powerful neighbors, mere survival sometimes seemed to be all that could be hoped for; or else—as under the apocalyptic successors to the prophets—fantastically improbable dreams of world domination were sometimes indulged. Yet at the same time a subtle transformation took place from within. The prophets developed the theme of the moral nature of the Hebrew destiny: God had chosen His people to be an ethically righteous people, and to spread the faith in one sole God and His ways abroad throughout the world. The scribes and priests developed a body of institutions and way of life—dietary laws, social regulations, ritual procedures in home and synagogue—that set this people definitely apart from all others. This, then, was their destiny—to be holy and separate people, who must live by a far

stricter rule than their fellows if they were to prove worthy of their high calling to bear witness to God before men.

Individualism was a late and somewhat eccentric growth in Judaism. As we might expect, the prevailing viewpoint through most of the Old Testament is a corporate one; the whole people are party to the covenant, not just a few individuals. Achan's entire family was destroyed for his sin; the evil deeds of anyone, in fact—especially of the rulers—would affect the total community. Religion was looked on as a group exercise and not as private piety. Only with Jeremiah and Ezekiel do we have the beginnings of a truly individual approach to religion, and they long remained only beginnings. Ecclesiastes and Job, portrayed as lonely individuals in search of life's meaning, are apart from the main stream of Jewish religion, and were undoubtedly written by those influenced by forces outside the main tradition. Even today, after social and political crises have time and again decimated the Jewish community, and when the extremest sort of individualism is frequent within the community—sometimes leading to frantic efforts to escape identification as a Jew—on the whole the sense of peoplehood is still immensely strong; Judaism is essentially one rather than many.

This sense of corporate destiny has been both strength and weakness. Undoubtedly the intense conviction that the Jewish way of life was divinely prescribed, down to the last jot and tittle of custom, has been a source of great strength. It has provided a hard, protective shell for the conservation of Judaism's spiritual values and been an effective channel for the expression of religious faith. It has been the solid core of a near-fanatic loyalty. There is no doubt that it has many times over saved the Jewish people from disintegration, and perpetuated their faith through the centuries. Yet it also has led to confusion on the part of everyone else—and perhaps even Jews themselves—as to what Judaism really is. Is it a racial strain, or purely a religion, or something of both? There are those in the Jewish community and outside who take each of these viewpoints. And such conflict of viewpoint has led to varied treatment of the group: sometimes on the basis of a racial strain (Hitler's Germany), sometimes as a competing faith (medieval Europe), sometimes as a mixture of both (popular anti-Semitism); as well as uncertainty within Judaism itself as to its own goals and ambitions. It has also made difficult the communication of its faith. Other peoples persist in seeing in the Jewish sense of being a chosen people only spiritual pride and exclusiveness. The universal values of Judaism, its monotheism and its high ethical standards, have been made largely inaccessible to the rest of the world because they have been almost inextricably interwoven with the physical externalities of the Jewish way of life. Thus, to a large part



of the Gentile world, Judaism represents a racial culture rather than a religious way of life.

### 3. *Shintoism: Our Emperor Is a God*

Japanese Shintoism has its own peculiar interest for us. It is contemporary, for one thing, in a day when nationalistic religions are almost completely a thing of the past. (In its modern form, though still attached to the idea of peoplehood, Judaism can hardly be called nationalistic—unless Zionism is about to re-enact a very old chapter of its history.) Further, Shintoism is unashamedly nationalistic at a time when other religious organizations, which have in actual fact been closely allied with national groups, still seek to keep up their claims to universalism and to hide their nationalistic bias. Thus the Russian Orthodox State Church, though Russian, has always emphasized its Orthodox Catholic and Christian nature, which binds it in one household of faith with other national churches in the Eastern tradition. So also with Moslem national groups.

Part of the reason for the peculiar character of Shintoism is its history. Originally Shintoism was of a rather primitive naturalistic character, with only minor nationalist overtones. The Japanese considered themselves, like many other peoples, to have descended from the gods, and to dwell in divinely favored islands which were the center of the world. Their deities were mostly nature forces, somewhat personalized, but thought of primarily in terms of their power to provide nourishment and furnish protection from evil spirits. Their worship was an elaborate and meticulous ritual of offerings, bowings, clappings of hands, and repetitions of prayer charms of great length, in all of which the gods were abundantly and fulsomely praised.

Such a faith, practiced at family and community level, served the Japanese people adequately for many centuries. Though the sovereign was given a special status, as having descended directly from the sun goddess Amaterasu, he played no dominant part in religious thinking. Their religious writings were somewhat meager and noninspirational; specific ethical teachings were almost nonexistent in the tradition—a fact never denied but later rationalized in a manner favorable to national pride.

Into this partial religious and ethical vacuum first came Confucian morals and Chinese ancestor worship; and then in the 6th century A.D. came Buddhist religion. The Buddhism that came to Japan was, of course, the more liberal missionary variety (*Mahayana*), which had spent some generations in China with considerable resulting modification; and its contact with Shintoism resulted in a further modification. One could perhaps best say that it was Shinto content given Buddhist form, though naturally the influence was mutual. Buddhism superficially took over all of Shinto, "the Way of the Gods," by the

simple expedient of calling all the Shinto nature gods *avatars* or incarnations of the Buddha. (Gautama Buddha, the historic Indian founder of the faith, largely disappeared from view.) Thus there resulted gods with the outer garments of Buddhism but speaking with the voice of Shinto; phallic posts, for example, were crowned with caps and gowns, given arms and legs, and re-named as Buddhist godlings. Buddhism compromised its prohibition against the killing of animals with the Shinto practice of sacrifice, by permitting the old and infirm animals—who would have died anyway, and would by sacrificial death receive a better reincarnation—to serve as victims. Buddhist shrines in Japan took over many of the Shintoist patterns of architecture and ritual usage. The blend that resulted was called either *Ryobu* (mixed) Buddhism, or *Ryobu* (dual) Shinto—depending on how one wished to think of it. And in this form it served as the national religion of Japan for a thousand years; so influential was it that a number of Japanese emperors forsook the throne for the monastery, as soon as one of their male children was old enough to be shown to the people by the regents as the new “emperor.”

But if the emperors were willing to forsake the world for the monastery, there were others in Japan who were willing to press forward into the political power-vacuum thus created. In the 8th century the *shoguns* or war lords rose to power, and continued for more than a thousand years as the actual rulers of Japan. Shoguns were of the Japanese nobility, and for the last seven hundred years or so of the shogunate they came almost entirely from the powerful Minamoto clan and its descendants. The emperor remained indeed the titular head of the empire, but actually was only a figurehead, or a mere pawn in the power game. Many occupants of the throne were only children, who were now and then exhibited on state occasions by the real rulers, and given empty honors for popular edification. And so it continued until the 19th century.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, however, came a series of three writers who were to provide the ideas for both political revolution and religious revival. Mabuchi, descendant of Shinto priests, sounded the anti-Buddhist, anti-Chinese war cry early in the 18th century. He wrote thus:

In ancient times when men's dispositions were straightforward, a complicated system of morals was unnecessary. . . . But the Chinese being bad at heart, in spite of the teaching which they got, were good only on the outside. The Japanese, being straightforward, could do without teaching. . . .

Having thus rationalized the lack of Japanese ethical system, this author went on to glorify the office of the emperor and attack the contemporary state of affairs. It was the Chinese corruption of the simple style of Japanese living that left the sovereign



occupying a highly dignified place, . . . [but] degraded to the intellectual level of a woman. The power fell into the hands of servants . . . they were sovereigns in fact, while the Mikado became an utter nullity.<sup>5</sup>

His disciple Motoöri carried the same line of thought still further. He contrasted the Chinese way—which by association at least included both Confucian morality and Taoist-Buddhist religion—as a “way of nature,” hence inferior to the Japanese “way of the gods.” He made a virtue out of the lack of moral teachings in the Japanese scriptures, which are mostly very primitive tales of world creation, and found the supreme moral and religious virtues to consist in absolute obedience to the emperor.

To the end of time each Mikado is a goddess’ son. His mind is in perfect harmony of thought and feeling with hers. He does not seek out new inventions, but rules in accordance with precedents which date from the age of the gods. And if he is ever in doubt he has resort to divination, which reveals to him the mind of the great goddess.<sup>6</sup>

Nor does the “goodness” or “badness” of the sovereign have anything to do with the question of reverence and obedience.

The Mikado is the sovereign appointed by the pair of deities Izanagi and Izanami who created this country. The sun goddess never said “disobey the Mikado if he is bad,” and therefore, whether he is good or bad, no one attempts to deprive him of his authority. He is the immovable ruler who must endure to the end of time, as long as the sun and moon continue to shine.<sup>7</sup>

Motoöri’s thought was perpetuated and developed by two of his disciples, Hirata and Hatori. They emphasized the alleged fact that the Japanese were different from other people, being pious and virtuous by nature; they glorified Shinto as the essence of Japanese virtue and wisdom, which had been distorted by the Buddhist and Confucian additions, and the emperor as the supreme embodiment of divine majesty and wisdom. “Pure” Shinto was revived again as the traditional religion of the ancestors; and though the Buddhists were too powerful to be ejected from their influential positions, or actually persecuted—indeed, perhaps *because* of this—the persecutive fervor of Shintoism was turned on the Christians. This small but growing group, the result of two centuries of Roman Catholic missionary work, could be and was exterminated, as representing foreignness in religion.

Such a convenient doctrine did not remain for long a purely religious affair;

<sup>5</sup> Robert O. Ballou, *Shinto, The Unconquered Enemy*, Viking Press, 1945, pp. 45 f.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

it provided a perfect tool for those who resented the power of the shogunate, and who sought a unifying concept for all Japanese culture. The discontent of lesser nobles, plus the poverty of the people, plus the shock of the "opening" of Japan to the West by Admiral Perry in 1853, plus the writings of Motoöri and Hirata (the latter dead only a few decades), produced the revolution of 1867-68. In this revolution the under nobility, long out of power, carried the emperor to supremacy and used the doctrines of his divine origin and absolute supremacy as major propagandist weapons. From this time Shinto was sedulously cultivated by the government both as patriotism and religion. For to serve the gods was to serve the emperor; to serve the emperor was to serve the gods; and to serve them both was to serve the nation supremely well.

It is difficult to suggest how seriously one ought to take the statements made by enthusiasts of Shintoist persuasion, but two or three quotations from proponents will show the general trend of Shintoist teachings, that peculiar fusion of religion and patriotism, of morality and politics, which it represents in its revived form:

The Sacred Throne was established at the time when the heavens and the earth became separated. The Emperor is Heaven-descended, divine and sacred; He is pre-eminent above all his subjects. He must be revered and is inviolable. He has indeed to pay due respect to the law, but the law has no power to hold him accountable to it. Not only shall there be no irreverence for the Emperor's person, but also He shall not be made a topic of derogatory comment nor one of discussion.<sup>8</sup>

Subjects have no mind apart from the will of the Emperor. Their individual selves are merged with the Emperor. If they act according to the mind of the Emperor, they can realize their true nature and attain the moral ideal. . . .<sup>9</sup>

Shinto . . . has culminated in Mikadoism or the worship of the Mikado or Japanese Emperor as a divinity during his lifetime as well as after his death. . . . Herein lies even at the present day, in my opinion, the essence or life of Shinto inseparably connected with the national ideals of the Japanese people. Japanese patriotism or loyalty as you might call it really is not simple patriotism or mere loyalty as understood in the ordinary sense of the word. . . . It is more—it is the lofty, self-denying, enthusiastic sentiment of the Japanese people toward their august ruler, believed to be something divine, rendering them capable of offering up anything and everything all dearest to them willingly . . . their own life itself, for the sake of their divinely gracious sovereign. . . . All this is nothing but the actual manifestation of the religious consciousness of the Japanese people.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> D. C. Holtom, *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism*, University of Chicago Press, 1943, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.



Shinto for many people remained in ritual much as it had always been, a worship of nature gods. But on this traditional ritual structure was neatly grafted the state-sponsored shrine worship and civic ritual for public occasions, so that one could scarcely tell where private and public worship, or religion and patriotism, separated from each other. Family worship became tinged with the spirit of loyalty to the state; communal ritual worship became a civic duty; and all of it merged at the top into a sense of absolute reverence and utter loyalty to the Emperor and the edicts issued in his name. Here is an instance in which nationalism is not man's other religion, but his only religion.

Such is the case in theory, at least, though it is perhaps impossible for an outsider to make a true estimate of the actual facts. As something of a deliberate state creation Shinto might seem to be rather superficial; yet perpetuated for three generations, and catching up in itself a strong emotional commitment to an ancient national culture, a unifying political authority, and an ancestral faith, it might well be tremendously powerful. On the surface it appears to have been a strong motivating force among Japanese soldiers in World War II; it apparently grows from ancient but still vital roots. Whether modern industrialization, military defeat, formal renunciation of his divine status by the Emperor, and continued contact with other nations will destroy the hold of Shinto over the Japanese people, or whether Shinto will only go underground for a time, as it did under Buddhist dominance, and then emerge in new power, remains to be seen.

#### 4. *Summary*

The inter-relation of religion and national groupings we have considered in this chapter is one of the most significant and persistent relationships in the history of religions. Though it lacks some of the intimacy of family and clan religion—the sense that the religious has to do with household and kinship concerns—racial and national religions have been able to compensate for this loss in other ways. The national group, for instance, is often a predominantly racial group as well; this gives at least a strong sense of ethnic community if not close blood relationship. Thus Japanese and Egyptians are more like each other than like outsiders. There is also the greater permanency and scope of the national community, compared to the clan or family group; the nation and race live on beyond both the individual and his clan. Identification with a large group of this sort gives a sense of personal significance and destiny not found in the smaller grouping. And, finally, there are subtle emotional likenesses between loyalty to the large group, and religion—even at religion's highest point of devotion to church and God. The ease with which nationalism has sometimes perverted even supposedly universal religions to its service, and the diffi-

culty men have in distinguishing their religious from their patriotic emotions, bear witness to this similarity; hence comes the naturalness and frequency of the alliance.

Nevertheless—as we observed in our study of religious development—national and racial religions have their limitations. Some such religions, like the Egyptian and Japanese, have frankly accepted these limitations and identified themselves with them. Judaism, which seeks to escape such limitation by teaching that there is only one God, also teaches that He has a specially chosen people, however, and consequently finds it difficult to harmonize its universalistic and its nationalistic strains of thought and practice. It cannot compete in the long run with completely universalistic religions, that is, with religious faiths that call for the allegiance of all men without regard to race or nation. And it is perhaps fair to suggest, as we shall do in the next chapter, that it is only when religion has reached such a universalistic basis of adherence that it achieves its fully distinctive social pattern.



## SECTION III

# CHURCH AND RITUAL DEVELOPMENT

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### *Chapter XVII*

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#### THE DISTINCTIVE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY

##### *Introductory*

The alliance between religious and natural groupings we have been surveying in the past chapters is by no means a merely temporary or passing phase of religion and culture, no matter what we may decide about its final destiny or religious value. Its strength has been in the fact that the social groupings with which religion has allied itself are natural groups that have grown out of every variety of cultural circumstance, and embodied the most basic forms of human association. In some cultures this pattern of religion will no doubt exist as long as those societies retain their present form. And in all cultures, even among those influenced by universal religions, the natural group will continue to serve to some extent as a focus for subordinate religious loyalties. That is, families will exercise a type of religious devotion on the family level; geographic regions will exhibit specifically regional characteristics in their religious observances; and seminational churches will no doubt remain, even though they profess a "worldwide" faith.

Nor can we perhaps overemphasize the importance of the social role that religion has played in these circumstances. Natural social groupings have indeed served as physical centers for the religious organization of life; but the interdependence of religion and its social forms has not been all in one direction. In fact, far more often religion is indispensable to the social group than the reverse. As social groups sought to relate themselves to the nonhuman reality about them, they were forced to define their aims and purposes by means of religious symbols. These symbols became the focus of the culture, the dynamic,

moving force within their patterns of life that determined their basic values. The religious loyalty to the group—more often than blood relationship, geographical factors, or political control—has provided that essential spiritual cohesion that makes the living social unit no mere organization but a true organism.

We can therefore speak with real meaning of the interpenetration of religion and society. Social values have been given a spiritual expression and religious quality, and human concerns have been placed in a superhuman context. The life of this world has been permeated by the awareness of another and spiritual world. And of course, in reverse, religious patterns have been deeply affected by their environing societies, so that the forms of organization, moral and esthetic values, concepts of human destiny, and patterns of action found in historic religions have been importantly molded by their social context.

This interpenetration has been both strength and weakness; for though society and religion have fortified each other, their mutuality has often been also a confusion of substance. As long as religion is largely implicit—not clearly separated from the rest of society either in its concerns or institutions—it cannot know its own essence. It will stand in constant danger of exerting no independent influence or directional force, but of contributing only decorative embellishments to a social structure, and providing a religious blessing to what is done on nonreligious grounds. Thus have national religions often been betrayed into sanctifying the most ruthless and brutal power politics.

As long then as religious and natural social structures coincide and social concerns become the content of religion, religion will be hampered in bearing its distinctive witness. It seems clear that only when it is able to detach itself somewhat from natural groups by creating its own fellowships on its own terms—fellowships and patterns of thought and action that cut across natural social lines—will it be able to achieve true independence and speak clearly in its capacity as religion. Obviously there are dangers here too: possible separation from vital natural concerns, sequestered alienation from the life of society, and a weak ineffectiveness resulting from such separations. Nor will it ever be able to remain completely detached from actual social groups and their concerns, or avoid the complications of organizing its own group life. Yet only from the vantage point of the distinctively religious society, different and apart from all other societies, can the religious genius fulfill its proper function of fearlessly criticizing and inspiring its contemporary society to higher aims. It is therefore to such definitely religious and partly independent groups that we now turn for our examples of the highest and most distinctive form of religion's social development.



I. *Distinguishing Marks of the Religious Society*

Whether or not religions are successful in their attempt to go "beyond" or get "above" their involvement with natural, but essentially nonreligious, social groupings, and create distinctive groups of their own, may be a matter of dispute. Often it may seem that specifically religious groupings are but new names for old groups—as in the case of class churches or racial-group churches. Yet religions have made repeated attempts to create universally inclusive fellowships; and if these attempts to create both a universal and distinctively religious type of society, uniquely different from all previous and all other societies, have been in great part unsuccessful, nevertheless they have been immensely significant in the history of religion and the development of cultures. They have explicitly stated the ideal of a universal society, given it some concrete formulation, and discovered important new religious values in the process.

It should be noted that a prime requisite for the development of the distinctive religious society is the possibility of religious innovation, which depends in turn on the opportunity afforded individual genius. Where innovation is impossible, and genius is suffocated by the oppressive depth and weight of ancient tradition, the distinctively religious society is most unlikely to appear; no new centers of idea, practice, or personal influence can develop. Yet even the possibility of new developments does not guarantee their actual occurrence. Zoroastrianism remained static, despite a promising beginning under a prophetic founder; Hebrew religion, with similar origins, became both flexible and dynamic. And who could have foretold that 6th century B.C. Brahmanism would produce Buddhism, or 1st century Judaism, Christianity? Looking backward, we may say that conditions were "favorable"; but favorable conditions indicate no overwhelming necessity for the appearance of new religious developments—only their possibility, as often unrealized as realized.

We have not been entirely without prototypes of the kind of society we are about to describe. The pattern of the *rite de passage* contains a premonition of it. Though anchored firmly in the primitive clan or tribal structure, and scarcely representing a distinctive religious grouping *per se*, such rites do to some extent cut across tribal and clan groupings; they divide the community on the basis of age, sex, and the shared experience of certain initiatory ordeals. Here is the incipient, though only incipient, formula for the creation of the distinctive religious society: *a new grouping centering in the specifically religious idea, experience, practice, or person, which is largely independent of the prevailing social structure and culture.*

This new center of experience and devotion is, then, the important and distinctive factor in the formation of the religious grouping; not so much because it is new, but because it is more distinctively and purely religious than any form

of natural grouping around which religion has built in the past. Such a center may take many forms. Zoroaster called his fellow Iranians to worship one of their gods, Ahura Mazda, as the supreme God, and him only. Hindus have split up into religious groups over the question of which one of the many incarnations of supreme Brahman they are to worship. Moses went to Egypt to call men to serve God under a new name, Jehovah, given him at the burning bush. Buddha was the recipient of an experience of inner enlightenment that opened to him the way of salvation, and he called others to share it. Jesus' interpretation of Jewish law made new distinctions that were the focal ideas of his disciples' fellowship of the Way. Luther proclaimed salvation by heart's faith and God's free grace, rather than by the works of Catholic sacrament. Methodist Protestants separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church over the question of the proper form of church government.

Thus the vital new center of the new fellowship may be a new god, a new name for an old god, a new revelation by an old or new god, a type of religious experience newly discovered, or a variant pattern of church organization—among other things. But these centers are alike in that they are specifically *religious* principles. This is their distinctiveness from the types of religious associations we have before observed, which were as much social, economic, or political as religious.

Nor must we forget the factor of the personality of the religious founder of a group. Not every religious grouping has been built about the person of a founder—but most of them have. The names of religious groups of all sorts bear witness to the fact: Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Christianity, Confucianism—to mention a few major varieties—and Lutheran, Calvinist, Campbellite, Franciscan, Augustinian, Russellite—to mention a few minor varieties. Even where the group name gives no evidence of the name or presence of a founder, there may nonetheless have been one: Wesley for Methodists, Ramakrishna for Theosophists, Nanak for Sikhs, Moses for Jews, Mahavira for Jains, Mary Baker Eddy for Christian Scientists, and Joseph Smith for Mormons, for example. More often than not the special personal characteristics of the founder of a religious group are an integral factor within the new faith center about which the group gathers. As channel of the new religious idea, vehicle of a special revelation, champion of the variant practice, or incarnation and spokesman for the new deity, the founder is almost indispensable to the formation of the distinctive religious society.

As soon as the new leader and the significant idea have appeared—unless they are born out of step with their time—they begin to gather about them followers who are attracted by one or another element in the new focus of doctrine and person. With this new focus the group begins to build out its full body of doc-



trine, to construct or adapt its ritual patterns, and take on organizational form. A new subculture has been born, whose significance and fortunes will depend partly on its own inner vitality and partly on outer conditions. Implicitly it is universal, including all men in its invitation to faith; actually, historical circumstances may confine it to a small segment of humanity within one culture.

## 2. *Types of Religious Societies*<sup>1</sup>

For our illustration of the major types of the distinctive religious society we shall use the three following: (1) Greek mystery religion, a voluntary religious association; (2) the Hindu *sampradaya* or theistic "sect"; (3) the Christian church.

### a. *Greek Mystery Religion*

The Greek mystery religions are examples of some of the earliest specifically religious groups to be found in the Western world. To some extent they represented the incursion of foreign deities into Greek life; but to a greater degree, they embodied the attractiveness of a more personalized worship than the Greek city-state and village religion had provided. They were in some sense competitors of the latter; they played an important part in later Greek religion, when the city-state had decayed and men were turning from the older religious forms to philosophy or skepticism.

There were three well-known cycles of mysteries in Greece: the Eleusinian, Dionysian, and Orphic; but here we shall describe primarily the Eleusinian. Our materials for study are slight, consisting mostly of archeological remains, and some hostile references on the part of the Christian Church fathers of the period. From these, however, we learn that the mystery cult was named from the chief shrine at Eleusis in the Bay of Salamis, thirteen miles from Athens, and that the goddess worshiped there was Persephone or Demeter. Many of the mystery rites suggest their origin in primitive fertility rites, which was one reason for the Church fathers' abhorrence of them; yet here they have also been filled with other symbolic and semimoral meanings.

The chief rites were held in the autumn. No one with a criminal record or public disgrace of any sort registered against him could be admitted to them. On September 13 young male participants bore sacred ritual articles from Eleusis to Athens; on the 15th there was a gathering of the would-be initiates for preliminary instruction; they were exhorted to sincerity of mind and pledged to secrecy. After two or three days of partial fasting, sundry purifications by washing, and several sacrifices of young pigs, the initiates and members were

<sup>1</sup> The classifications followed here are those of Joachim Wach, *The Sociology of Religion*.

ready to start on the processional at dawn of the 19th. It was a slow one, taking the whole day for its accomplishment. The marching was broken by interludes of consecration and ritual dancing at the shrines along the way—some of them dedicated to Bacchus as the vegetation spirit. The participants arrived at sundown and rested for the ensuing three-day secret ceremonial.

We do not have any actual descriptions of these secret ceremonies, only scattered hints. Apparently there was an elaborate ritual drama, in which the initiate participated symbolically in the annual death and rebirth of Persephone, the goddess who had been kidnapped to Hades by Pluto but was allowed to return to earth each spring. We know that the drinking of a special beverage of barley meal and mint water, and the handling of some of the sacred symbols, were part of the procedure. The second-year initiates appear to have witnessed a full-scale representation of the rescue of Persephone from the underworld. After three days the whole procession started back to Athens.

This was not the only mystery religion in Greece—though we know still less about the others. There was the Dionysian mystery of an ecstatic sort, in which the flesh of live animals was torn and eaten, alcoholic beverages partaken of, and sexual intercourse indulged in. The Orphic cult was a milder adaptation of this Thracian cult; and there were still other cults we know mostly or only by name—Serapis, Isis, and Mithra.

The main goal of the mystery was salvation, that is, personal immortality. Heretofore the Greek picture of the after-life had been that of a bleak shadow-existence in the nether regions. In the mystery cults men sought assurance of a brighter future. For almost the first time in Greek religion, the interest in immortality was brought to a positive and hopeful expression; the mystery cult initiate was assured that his performance of the rites would guarantee him an immortal life. A correlative feature was the emphasis on the mysterious aspect of the rites. And meager as the content of the mystery might seem—something like the “secret” rites of an American fraternal order—it brought a much needed freshness and vitality to Greek religious practice. A still further attraction was its personalized and universalized appeal: the mystery was open to anyone of good character; and its assurance to him was personal—something that Greek community and state religion had largely failed to give him. And, finally, we have here the tight unity of the semisecret religious group, the sense of the small, intimate society whose members share its mysteries with each other apart from the indifferent or hostile world.

#### b. *The Hindu Sampradaya*

Hinduism as a whole can scarcely be termed a religious society in the sense in which we are using the term here. To be sure, it is something of a social unit,



and is religious throughout its length and breadth. Yet the manifestations and levels of religious belief and practice are on the one hand so greatly varied, while on the other held together in that extremely vague unity we call Hinduism, that the compound defies simple description. Perhaps the best we can do is to say that Hinduism as a whole is a great religiously determined social system that is the home of a great variety of religious societies bound together by a common fatherland, cultural ties, and some common religious values such as reverence for the cow, a generally nonviolent philosophy of life, and reverence for the Vedas.

We therefore have chosen one type of the many Hindu religious societies that perhaps comes nearer to a Western sect or church than anything else in Hinduism. The *sampradaya* is about halfway between the Greek mystery and a full-fledged church. It is a genuine religious society, since it is gathered about a particular quality of religious experience, a specific set of religious ideas, and certain hero-leaders. To a considerable extent it cuts across caste lines, though it has not been able entirely to overcome that all-enveloping social form. Yet it is not quite a sect, denomination, or church: it is a ritual unity, a common loyalty to one specific tradition and its spokesmen, rather than a tightly organized society. And it tends to emphasize its positive teachings rather than its negative differences from other religious groups.

The important *Sri-Sampradaya* is one of four such groups among the worshipers of the god Vishnu, an ancient sun god. He is honored rather nominally by the majority of Hindus, but these four groups give him special honor as the Adorable One. They worship him by the intensity of their love and faith rather than by good works or mystical knowledge. He is for them a highly personalized center of emotional devotion.

Vishnu, however, has his *avatars*, or human individuals in whom he has been incarnated, and it is on this matter of the choice of an incarnation for worship that the four groups divide. The *Sri-Sampradaya* worships the avatar Rama exclusively; and its sacred book is the Ramayana epic, which is the story of Rama's earthly life. It looks to Ramanuja of the 12th century, and Ramananda of the 14th, as its pioneers or founders; they first directed India's attention to Vishnu as a special object of worship. Ramananda was in addition something of a reformer: he taught in the vernacular Pali rather than the classical Sanskrit; he spoke of the brotherhood of all men; he opposed many of the eating-bathing regulations of orthodox Hinduism; and he called his group "the liberated." The sect was not able to break down the caste system, however, but finally became something of a caste group itself; yet its liberal doctrines have been immensely influential in India. Tulsi Das, a religious poet of later centuries, gave its main ideas literary expression in an effort to reach the poor and outcast. And

these same ideas have led Hinduism to attempt a more popular formulation of its faith in recent centuries, as well as furnishing a theoretical base for a protest against caste which is now at last coming into its full expression—helped by modern conditions.

Thus the *Sri-Sampradaya* belongs to that great mass of Vishnu-worshipping groups to be found in contemporary India, and shares their common emphasis on devotion as the way of salvation, much as a Protestant denomination belongs to the Protestant "Church." Like Protestants, its members emphasize the distinctive teachings of their 12th and 14th century reformation fathers-in-the-faith as a point of departure from orthodox Hinduism; and despite sectarian variations, their ritual usages are similar. Their dominant conceptions are anticaste—that is, not determined by the prevalent social structure, hence theoretically tending to religious universalism. And in fairness it must be said that even in their actual practices they are only partly caste-determined, much as Christian churches proclaim a universal gospel, yet make serious concessions to racial and class distinctions.

Here, then, is a true type of religious society; yet it lacks some of the features of a churchly conception, and the close-knit organizational structure we shall find in the full-fledged church group. To this group we now give our attention.

### c. *The Church Group*

With the church-type group we come to the fullest development and the most distinctive form of the religious society. The word "church" is of specifically Christian origin and usage, and does not properly apply to other religious societies; yet for our purpose here we may apply the term rather broadly to that type of religious grouping that stands at the apex of the religious development, whether Christian or not.

The line distinguishing the church group from the other groups we have described is perhaps not always perfectly distinct; yet we may consider those groups to be churches that have the following characteristics: (1) They participate fully in the quality of being a "called out" group—that is, their members are gathered into the group, not primarily on the basis of any merely natural social grouping, but on some distinctively religious basis. They belong to it because of personal attraction to the founder, belief in the distinctive doctrines of the group, or because of the quality of religious experience to be found in it. Hence these groups are always implicitly—often explicitly—universal, seeking disciples among all men. (2) The church group is a "founded" group. It is called into being by the person and work of a historic individual, about whose person and distinctive teachings a separate and continuing group has formed. (3) A church group in its developed form gains a full-bodied organi-



zational life. It achieves a distinctive social structure, a body of doctrine, special meeting places as the rule, and a definite membership. The church group is, as it were, a society within society, a culture within culture, and a world within the world.

In such terms the natural groups, though invested with religious meaning, do not qualify as churches; their basis of grouping is social, biological, or political, rather than religious. Judaism, of course, offers a difficult case to classify; it has some of the marks of the church group in possessing Moses as its founder, an organized membership (though it is often more a matter of birth within the group, rather than a voluntary joining), and in being implicitly universal in its teachings. Yet, rightly or wrongly, it is persistently identified as something of a racial entity, and its past, and perhaps future, history is tied to the political fortunes of a national group. Hence we have classified it as such. Although the Greek mysteries and Hindu *sampradaya* are true religious societies, the former lacked both founder and churchly organization, and the latter has never achieved the close-knit distinctiveness of a church group to set it apart from other Hindu cultural groups. It is of Sikhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity that we can most fittingly speak as church-type religions.

### *Evolution of the Church Group*

Still using the concept of church in its broad sense, we may distinguish three stages in the formation of a church. The first is the appearance of a *founder*. In the church-type religions mentioned above we would speak of Nanak, Mahavira, Zoroaster, Buddha, Mohammed, and Jesus respectively; each was a historic individual, about whose person and teachings a fellowship of a distinctive sort developed.

We must not think that any one of these founders appeared apart from all previous religious groups. Perhaps Mohammed shows the least direct dependence on his immediate environment; but even he drew heavily on Jewish and Christian sources for his new gospel to the Arab tribesmen. And Nanak tried deliberately to make a workable synthesis out of the major features of two existent religions, Islam and Hinduism. The others each achieved a more or less radical reinterpretation of the religion of their fathers; and with these reinterpretations as a basis, the new religious groups were formed. In some respects the deviation of Jesus from the Jewish pattern was the least radical of any of the founders of great religions, for his followers sought at first to remain within the Jewish fold.

There is of course no rule by which we may always predict how great the deviation from traditional patterns must be, or of what character, for it to take

on the form of a new faith-group. Unforeseen factors may take what seem to be only slight deviations and produce a major new variety; whereas variations that seem radical may sometimes dissolve back into the parent body—as with Indian Buddhism's absorption by Hinduism. In the case of Christianity, the person of Jesus and his reinterpretation of Judaism, as conceived by some of his disciples, found such a ready acceptance among Gentiles that it carried the faith far from its Jewish origins. Another group of disciples (Ebionites), that sought to keep Jesus and his teachings within the Jewish framework as a sub-group, shortly disappeared from the pages of history.

At this first stage of the founding of religion there is, of course, also a circle of believers. They are attracted to their founder-master by what seems to them a special endowment of divine power (called *Charism* by the Greeks) that rests upon him, his unique or special doctrines, and the new type of religious experience found in fellowship with him. They consider themselves sharers of his power and destiny, a select inner circle of initiates in the meaning of the new faith. In this religious cohesiveness there is often the element of a strong personal affection for the founder himself, such as we find with Buddha and Jesus and their immediate disciples.

The death of the founder precipitates a crisis in the group that leads to the second stage. With the founder passed on and the immediate personal tie with him broken, several questions pose themselves: Can the divine power of the founder still be experienced in the group, and mediated by it to others? Has his death left the truth of his teachings undiminished—or even increased? Are those teachings of great enough significance to be perpetuated? When the group makes affirmative answers to these questions—often instinctively rather than deliberately, of course—it is on the way to becoming a distinctive new religious fellowship or *Brotherhood*. Otherwise it is soon absorbed back into the ancestral pattern as a slightly variant emphasis within the old group; without the vitality or leadership to distinguish itself, it is subject to an early death.

At this second stage some further organization of the life and thought of the group ensues. The teachings of the founder must be interpreted in the light of new situations. No one wishes to set himself up as equal in authority with the founder, whose sayings therefore remain the classic statements of the faith; but the spreading circle of believers must needs explain them to the interested, and provide for both leadership and fellowship. Let it be noted, however, that this is not yet the period of formal organization or creedal statement; the Brotherhood remains simple in structure and ritual, sparing of doctrinal elaborations, and flexible in nature. This is a plastic period in which rigid patterns have not yet been formed.

The second stage of the Brotherhood, in which the original circle of believers



are the supreme living authorities—even though less in stature than the departed founder—cannot, in the nature of the case, long endure. The group is enlarging—perhaps rapidly. The original members of the circle die in their turn, and contact with the founder becomes third-hand. How shall his teachings be authoritatively interpreted, and the quality of the religious experience of the original fellowship be preserved?

Thus we come inevitably to the period of organizational discipline and creed-making. The original teachings of the founder, and his deeds, are committed to writing, that later generations of disciples may also know them. Interpretations and elaborations are added. The meanings of ambiguous passages are subjected to intensive study, and in some faiths reduced to hard and fast (orthodox) doctrine. A body of traditional usage and ritual grows up. The organization of the group is given detailed form, usually of a hierarchical sort, with one or more supreme rulers or interpreters at the top and many gradations of lesser officials below. The distinction between layman and professional religionist is more sharply drawn; in some cases there is an almost complete separation of the professional clergy by means of education, special garb, manner of life, and so forth.

This process of the hardening of church thought and organizational pattern takes place only gradually, of course, often over a period of hundreds of years. Nor is there anything final even about this stage; for a strong organization and authoritative creed soon raise up counter forces, and make distinctions within the community of faith itself, as we shall see later. But when the group has achieved a definitive creedal statement, has created a solid organizational structure with its constituted spiritual authorities, and has elaborated a distinctive ritual pattern, we may say that here at last is a *church*. Here is a subsociety within society, organized around a specifically religious center of its own choosing and making, and fully conscious of itself as a separate social organism.

Such a group possesses great advantages over more loosely organized or less definitely religious societies. It has a clear and definite body of doctrine. It has a ritual of distinctive character, similar in all its branches, which identifies it in the eyes of outsiders. It is united by a strong sense of brotherhood in the common faith, and by personal allegiance to the founder of the faith. It has an organization that enables it to endure local crises, to perpetuate itself through the years, and to provide social fellowship. And it may appeal to many different classes and races of men—since it is not founded in terms of any single one of them. Thus in every way the church group is well fitted to maintain itself for a long period, and to project itself into varied cultures.

Although we have made this description of the evolution of a church type of religious society rather general, the Christian Church obviously is an excellent

example of the above development—perhaps the best of all. It began with a founder, Jesus. He and his twelve disciples were all Jews, but the brotherhood soon expanded to include many Gentiles, particularly as a result of the work of Paul, a latecomer to the group of first-generation disciples. The brotherhood rapidly extended its small cells through the Roman Empire during the first three hundred years of its existence, despite sporadic persecutions, and was publicly recognized as the preferred religion by the Emperor Constantine in A.D. 313.

Once aboveground and in a dominant position, the Church set about putting its house in order. Church buildings were constructed in great numbers. During the 4th and 5th centuries several great church councils were held to define the orthodox creed. The bishops, who were originally local church officials in the larger centers of population, gradually established themselves as the pillars of orthodoxy and spiritual authorities over the rest of the clergy. A basic ritual pattern for regular worship, and special ones for particular church occasions, were adopted. Thus, when the sheltering Empire collapsed in the 5th and 6th centuries, the Church stood ready to carry on its independent career.

#### *The Church within the Church*

But no social group is ever able to ascend to a given plateau of development, and remain there indefinitely. The achievement of full churchly stature by a religious group is not a final goal once attained, and forever after maintained without change; society about it is full of changing pressures and influences to which it is not immune. And, indeed, the very process of becoming a church has created pressures within the religious society itself, which are bound to result in change.

Some of this change takes the form of inner compartmentalization—the appearance of special separate groups within the church body itself. This never occurred within Buddhism on the whole, since Buddhism itself began as a special group within the larger religious life of Hinduism. That is, the full Buddhist way was from the very first the way of the monk and the nun; and only later did a community of laymen—who could participate only limitedly in the monkish way—gather about the professionals. But all the other groups we have called churchly differentiated themselves from without inward, so to speak: first there was the larger fellowship without major distinctions, and then the inner specialization.

These inner compartmentalizations occur as a rule in a way somewhat akin to the founding of the religion itself. An individual leader arises within the faith, proclaiming his special interpretation or novel emphasis on old teachings, and draws a personal following. Unless such followings are forced outside



the church by a rigid orthodoxy, however, they may well remain indefinitely within its total structure as a special-interest group. The church may even dignify their particular variety of expression by allowing them to set it up as a specialized order of ministry with its fitting way of life; the teaching Dominicans and Jesuits, the serving Franciscans, the praying Trappists, and other similar orders in the Roman Catholic Church, are good examples. monks ✓

Such churches within the Church have a very understandable origin. Their "founders" may desire to live a more concentratedly religious life than is possible in the Church at large. Such was the case when new converts flocked into the Christian Church immediately after the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine. This flood of half-instructed new believers impressed some of the faithful as an invasion of the Church by the pagan world. They therefore sought sanctuary within the secluded or monastic life, a life apart even from the majority of the Church, given to prayer, devotion, and asceticism. And then there is always the mystic—sometimes the same person as the monastic—who seeks to achieve communion with God in his own special way because he finds ordinary public ways inadequate. He does not assimilate well into the church organization, and is often looked upon with suspicion; yet frequently, if given a little elbow room, he turns into one of the Church's most illustrious saints.

An interesting variation of this far-from-the-madding-crowd kind of sainthood is provided by the pietistic brotherhood group, such as has frequently developed in the Christian Church. Such a group seeks the renewal of the intimacy of that small, devout group, which it conceives the first circle of disciples to have been, but does not wish to go "out of the world," *i.e.*, into a monastery, to achieve it. It sedulously avoids political entanglements, either within or without the Church, and as a rule is scrupulously orthodox in doctrinal matters; it seeks only to intensify the spiritual life of its contemporary church and society by personal example and piety.

Such was the medieval group called Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life. The group was founded by Gerhard Groote (1340-84), a Dutchman, who was deeply concerned about the spiritual disorders of the Catholic Church of his day. Though converted from a worldly life by a monk and trained for three years in a monastery, he never took full priestly orders. He spent much time in preaching against the moral laxity of his time, and met considerable official opposition, but never considered withdrawing from the Church.

The Brothers and Sisters were never formally recognized as an official order, but carried on semiofficially for many years. They considered themselves to occupy a mediating position halfway between the professional monastic and the layman, and imposed a rigid discipline upon themselves while they lived "secular" lives in the world. They wore a sort of uniform of black or gray gar-

ments. Rising at 3:30 in the morning, they observed established seasons of prayer and meditation throughout the day, even in the midst of ordinary work. At their meals they listened to readings from Scriptures and the saints' lives; they urged the laity to read such edifying works likewise. They worked conscientiously at their trades on farm and shop or in a craft, as a rebuke to the often lazy monastic life of their time. But their greatest accomplishment was in the field of teaching. They set themselves to raise the educational and moral standards for the young throughout Western Europe by teaching and by founding schools. For several generations they labored devotedly and successfully at this task.

### *The Church without the Church*

But—alas for religious harmonists—not all divisions with regard to faith can take the form of special orders operating within the Church; right along with the emergence of special orders within the church group go heretical divisions from it. No doubt the creation of a churchly pattern of thought and organization is bound to produce such divisions, or at least to increase them; but it may be also that such divisions are inherent in religious groups as such, long before they become churches. For example, the New Testament tells us of one of Jesus' twelve disciples who besought him to forbid the miracles of another disciple "who followeth not with us"; and Paul's epistles are full of comments about his running fight with others in the Christian fellowship—fellow apostles included. Islam, too, was early rent by divisions over the proper order of succession to the Prophet's authority and power—though it neatly solved the problem of different versions of its scriptures which has troubled other faiths, when a resourceful leader burned all variant copies shortly after Mohammed's death.

And so we might continue the tale of divisions within every faith, for it is a long one. But in all of them we observe that as soon as an orthodoxy of belief, authority, or ritual is established, heresies also begin to appear; it is generally true that the crop of heresy is as large in proportion as the orthodoxy is rigid and aggressive. No doubt the very statement of "right" or "correct" standards of thought, opinion, or teaching (which is the root meaning of *orthodox*) invites the question: "Who has decided upon this, and upon what right or evidence?" And even though there may be official authorities within the group whose specific business is the definition and enforcement of orthodoxy, there are always some who are unconvinced. But what turns a potential religious specialist within the Church to an opponent without the Church, a "protestant" against it, is a complex matter we cannot fully discuss here. Sometimes it is merely the fact that the heretic comes to the dispute with the fewest arguments and supporters, and must go outside the organization to build his orthodoxy



(for of course the heretic is orthodox to himself). Sometimes it is a matter of direct challenge to church authority and doctrine that cannot be ignored, such as Luther's revolt against Rome in the 16th century. At other times it is mainly a personal conflict between church leaders, all of whom desire outstanding roles in the church organization when there are not enough to go round; or else it is the result of personal incompatibilities.

Whatever the immediate historical context, three types of differences cause divisions more characteristically than any others. One is difference of *doctrine*. Buddhists were heretics to the Hindus because they did not reverence the Vedas or observe caste rules; Arians were turned out of the Christian Church in the 4th century because of their doctrine of Christ's relationship to God; and in the 19th century Unitarians left orthodox ranks for the same reason. Sufi mystics were nearly excommunicated from Islam before al-Ghazzali produced a sort of mystical orthodoxy in the 12th century.

*Ritual* differences have proved to be specially divisive. Buddha asserted that the total Brahmanical ritual pattern was ineffective in gaining salvation and therefore separated himself from it. European Reformers protested the "superstitious" rites of the Roman Church; consequently they were excommunicated. English Puritans a century later rejected the "idolatrous and papish" usages of the Established (Protestant) Church, and were outlawed. And surely ritual differences, if nothing else, would prevent the union of a Greek Orthodox Church and Pentecostal sect, or of Episcopalian and Free Baptist groups.

Finally, *organizational* differences have led to substantial divisions within church groups, particularly in the Christian Church. Lutherans and Calvinists opposed what they called Roman autocracy and tyranny in church rule, typified by its hierarchical organization. Other Protestants even found some of the standard Protestant versions of free "enlightened" spiritual authority objectionable, and as Puritan, Baptist, Congregationalist, and Quaker, sought democratic, local self-government in church affairs. American Methodism was the victim of at least one revolt from the episcopal form of government by the Methodist Protestants. And one of the greatest obstacles to the achievement of church unity in Christendom today lies in the conflicting claims raised by papal, episcopal, presbyterian, and free forms of church government.

### *Conclusion*

In this process of the formation of inner compartments and outer divisions in the history of churches, there is neither any absolute judgment of worth that can be made about them nor any logical stopping place. A new division is obviously of great importance to those who make it—on whatever grounds and no matter how it looks to others either within or without the church. Ironically

enough, it often occurs that both parties to the division are each convinced that they and they alone represent the true faith. "Heretic" is a name anyone can use, though generally the larger and more influential group wins this battle of names.

Not even the rather prejudicial use of words like "church," "denomination," "sect," and "cult" quite settles the matter. In the Christian tradition almost every group uses the term "church" about itself, but will not always allow it to other bodies within the tradition. Roman Catholic and state churches often seek to monopolize the use of the word for themselves, rather implying that it automatically means the "true" church, while other groups are mere "sects" or "chapel" groups. Protestants frequently use the term "denomination" among themselves but somewhat condescendingly refer to the lesser, newer, and perhaps bizarre groups as "sects" or "cults." In all honesty it should be admitted that such terms are seldom used objectively or descriptively.

✓ We can make only one or two general observations here. It would seem that there are two extremes to be avoided if major groups would escape further schism: the complete suppression of difference of opinion and practices by authoritarian means, and the avoidance of *any* standard of belief or organization by a complete elasticity. The former course has led in the past to disastrous explosions (witness the Reformation in Europe), and the latter leads to the dissipation of churchly character into a vague cultural multiplicity of religious movements—as witness the nature of Hinduism. A considerable variety of religious expression within the basic traditional pattern, and the reduction of actual fighting-ground to major issues, appear to be a wiser course. The other observation is that there seems to be a lessening of the tendency to further division among many religious groups in many areas of the world. This is in part due to the stronger pressure of nonreligious forces from the outside, as well as to a general gain in tolerance on the part of most religious faiths; and in part also it is due to the shrinking field for religious diversity in a world of increasing cultural interpenetration.



## Chapter XVIII

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### THE RELIGIOUS GROUP AS A RITUAL UNITY

One other aspect of the social life of religion calls for extended attention, though we have incidentally referred to this feature in passing: namely, the ritual unity of the religious fellowship. For whatever other features may be found in religious societies, it is also importantly true that they are *ritual* groups. We shall never understand them fully as social units until we take this factor into account. Ritual is no mere pastime occupation or decorative effect; it is close to the vital heart of any group, and serves an absolutely essential function in binding it together and providing for its propagation as a social organism.

Before we go further it would be well to define clearly what we mean by "ritual." *Ritual is the patterned ceremonial aspect of group behavior*; it is a pattern of group behavior, prescribed by custom or authority for observance on particular occasions. It frequently has the quality of being highly stylized according to a set form—sometimes down to the smallest detail. It is full of symbolic and half-expressed doctrines or themes. In the broadest sense it applies to any traditional group pattern of action, such as the cheering of a crowd at a football game, the type of official oratory and style of delegate demonstration at a political convention, the prescribed manner of Japanese tea drinking, or the conventional politeness at any social gathering. But usually ritual is most particularly identified with its religious manifestations.

#### 1. *Primitive Myth and Ritual*

The importance of ritual among primitive peoples is tremendous. It is the basic cultural form. It embodies the fullest expression of the group culture; it combines the traditional lore and historic legends of the group with varied forms of artistic expression. It also serves as the main educative medium in the absence of a literature or of formal academic instruction. The young are fitted to participate in the total group life by learning the significance of that life through participation in its rituals. Still further, it has that most practical and important function of guaranteeing the health and happiness of the group as a whole. For at the primitive level the religious function of making contact with

more-than-human powers is the main purpose of ritual and it is therefore viewed as essential to the material welfare of the total society and all its members.

This severely practical bent of ritual among primitives cannot be overemphasized; it is in keeping with the generally practical role of magical and religious patterns of action in the primitive's life. So far as he is concerned, religion in general, and its concentrated expression in ritual in particular, are valuable techniques for gaining friends and influence among those spirits or powers where it will do him and his group the most good. Should you therefore inquire of the primitive: "Why do you spend so much time in ritual? Why don't you spend it on something productive, like sharpening your knives, making better plow-sticks or hoes, or in longer hours at the hunt?" he would be astounded at your stupidity. He might ask in turn: "What do you mean, 'unproductive'? How could anyone use less ritual and hope to be successful?" This ritual is as essential to farming, hunting, and fishing as the hoe, the spear, or the fishing boat; indeed, these will not function successfully without their proper ritualistic preparation.

For the primitive, then, ritual is an important *causal* technique; he believes that the ritual forms at his disposal have a coercive force. When they are properly performed certain effects must follow; even certain periodic natural events will not regularly occur without such a performance. As S. H. Hooke has written:

The main purpose of the great rituals . . . is to establish a *causal* link between the known and the unknown, between the calculable and the incalculable elements in human experience. . . .<sup>1</sup> [They are occupied] with certain practical and pressing problems of daily life. There were the main problems of securing the means of subsistence, to keep the sun and the moon doing their duty, to insure the regular flooding of the Nile, to maintain the bodily vigor of the king, who was the embodiment of the prosperity of the community.<sup>2</sup>

This explains in large measure the great insistence on complete accuracy that is found at all levels of ritual observance—or at least the origin of such insistence; unless a ritual is correctly performed it is not effective. Sloppy ritual performances, incorrect even in small details, render the whole business worthless, perhaps even dangerous; for the evil powers to be controlled, or the beneficent powers to be urged to favorable action, may be angered by such carelessness. Therefore the primitive follows his ritual pattern as carefully as a scientist his formula, and for the same reasons. And perhaps something of this reasoning remains subconsciously in ritual observances of a much higher order—though

<sup>1</sup> S. H. Hooke, ed., *The Labyrinth*, Oxford, 1937, p. vi, italics added.

<sup>2</sup> S. H. Hooke, ed., *Myth and Ritual*, Oxford, 1933, pp. 2, 3.



there also a love of esthetic proportion and ancient traditional form may enter in, more largely than on lower levels, to maintain the classic pattern unbroken.

The very practical use of ritual at the lower levels of religion may be illustrated by the ceremonial surrounding the "enthroning" of the king among ancient Middle Eastern cultures. Among Babylonians and Hebrews the king was viewed as the representative or embodiment of divine power in the community. The tribe, as a "psychic whole" or "corporate personality," believed that its own welfare depended on the health, strength, and success of the sovereign. His confirmation in power was at the same time and by the same act the confirmation of the divine power resting on the group. Thus on the occasion of the New Year the king was ritually humiliated (dethroned) as a symbol of the persistent threat of the powers of the underworld. Subsequently he was "resurrected" and "enthroned" anew, in a ceremonial symbolic of the supremacy of deity and the renewed bond between him and his people. This ceremonial was considered to be causally effective in strengthening that bond; and we may well have a portion of the ritual of that ceremonial as used among the ancient Hebrews preserved in Psalm 24.<sup>3</sup>

The religious *myth*, which is often a story of the beginnings of the world, or of the origin of a prehistoric custom, or the explanation of parts of the religious ritual, is often an important part of that ritual, and its role should be clearly understood. The myth has sometimes been interpreted as a primitive attempt to "explain" the world, or the beginning of deliberate intellectual speculation. Though the intellectualization of religion may use the earlier myth as its initial focal point (see Part IV), and from such a beginning proceed to formal doctrine, doctrinal statement is not the real function of myth in primitive ritual. The myth is primarily a functional part of the ritual, inherited from the past, with little or no rationalization of its meaning. It is something to be done rather than something to be thought about. The myth is, so to speak, the verbalized form of the ritual, and the ritual is the concretized, acted-out myth; the ritual pattern itself is the primary structure. It has come down from the dim past, not as an explicit statement of religious beliefs, but as an approved technique for influencing supernatural powers for human good, and it is rather instinctively taught and followed. One writer puts it thus:

My own view is that savage religion is something, not so much thought out as danced out; that, in other words, it develops under conditions, psychological and sociological, which favor emotional and motor processes, whereas ideation remains relatively in abeyance.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See Aubrey R. Johnson, "The Role of the King," in *The Labyrinth*.

<sup>4</sup> R. R. Marett, *The Threshold of Religion*, p. xxxi.

We have noted before that the religious and magical viewpoints among primitives are closely related. It is almost inevitable, therefore, that ritual, as the supreme cultural expression, will be a confusing amalgam of magical and religious elements. Prayer, spell, incantation, petition, charm, and curse freely intermingle, with no great distinction made among them. The mechanical coercive quality that is the essence of magic—that a certain effect *must* follow from the use of certain ritual formularies—is present throughout. And this generally magical quality of ritual persists long after the cultural and religious context as a whole has advanced considerably beyond the primitive level. This is because ritual patterns, cultural or religious, tend to remain unchanged longer than any other elements in either field. And since they embody the most ancient human beliefs, implicitly present in symbolic form, the primitive and magical are thus carried along in the cultural stream well beyond the point of their origins and well past the time of genuine congruence with their total cultural contexts.

An example of this is the manner in which religion and magic are mingled in the following quotation from Babylonian sources. We may well ask: "Is it prayer, or magic formula for casting out disease, that we have here?"

Away, away, far away, far away!  
 For shame, for shame, fly away, fly away!  
 Round about face, away, far away!  
 Out of my body, away!  
 Out of my body, far away!  
 Out of my body, for shame!  
 Out of my body, fly away,  
 Out of my body, face about!  
 Out of my body, go away.  
 Into my body, do not return!  
 To my body, do not approach!  
 My body do not oppress!

By Shamash the mighty, be ye exorcised!  
 By Ea, the Lord of all, be ye exorcised!  
 By Marduk, the chief exorciser of the gods, be ye exorcised!  
 By Gish-Bar, your consumer, be ye exorcised!  
 Be ye restrained from my body.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. *The Social Function of Ritual*

Before we proceed to examine the manner in which myth and ritual develop in the advancing life of religion, we may observe another of its functions, in

<sup>5</sup> Morris Jastrow, *Aspects of Religious Belief in Babylonia and Assyria*, Putnam, 1911, pp. 303 f.



addition to the causal effectiveness so prized among primitives. This is the cohesive power it exercises as a sort of group cement at all levels of culture. One might say, indeed, that societies break down in part because they can find no fitting ritual expressions for their values. And in support of this it is interesting to note how deliberately created social groups in our own time have just as deliberately sought large-scale ritual expressions to bind themselves together. Hitler's Nazi party, for example, set up mammoth public ceremonial demonstrations, replete with ranks of marching men, flying banners, group singing, mass salutes, and impassioned oratory. As in other totalitarianisms, "der Fuehrer's" portrait and the symbol of the party appeared everywhere, being accorded a sort of mystical reverence of religious proportions.

Erich Fromm, whose definition of religion we earlier borrowed, believes that we who live in political democracies do not fully recognize the power of ritual to bind our citizens together; or if we do, we do not utilize our knowledge effectively: "Modern man in democratic cultures does not have meaningful rituals." Yet, he goes on to say, ritual expression is *absolutely* necessary to a fully satisfying individual and social life:

We not only have the need for a frame of orientation which makes some sense of our existence and which we can share with our fellow men; we also have the need to express our devotion to dominant values by *actions* shared with others. A ritual, broadly speaking, is shared action expressive of common strivings rooted in common values. . . . The need for ritual is undeniable and vastly underestimated.<sup>6</sup>

Ritual is primarily a group exercise; it is nearly impossible to think of it as solitary in performance. Where the individual exercise of ritual does appear, as in private worship, it is a relatively late arrival in the process of religious development, and a highly refined expression of it; moreover, it is derived almost entirely in both form and significance from the group usage.

This is not to suggest, however, that as a public expression of group life and values, ritual displaces the values of the individual; quite to the contrary, it expresses individual values in a group context, and is a powerful social force in great part just because it does so. For the group is made up of individuals. It is they who individually perform the ritual actions, and are moved emotionally by them. It is their individual hopes, fears, beliefs, and inmost desires that are here expressed. Indeed, a public service of worship may be far more intimate in this sense than many a personal conversation, because it brings to the surface what is in the deepest heart of every man, and dares to set it forth in generalized public form as he would be embarrassed to do privately to a friend. A ritual is successful in so far as it is thus able to be both a public and an individual personal expression of values and emotions.

<sup>6</sup> *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 108.

Yet we must repeat that ritual is primarily a group activity; as he participates, one feels his unity with other men, realizes that he is not alone in his struggles, not peculiar in his hopes and fears. The barriers of individualism are broken down; distinctions that ordinarily, and for the most of his life, set him aside from others as lower or higher in the social scale, are here temporarily overcome, and for ritual purposes all members of the group are placed on the same level. In expressing himself ritually as a member of a group, the individual feels the united power of the group surging through him, like a small boat responding to a swelling tide; the motion which activates him is not that of his own excitement alone, but the pulsing of a mighty force that bears him forward and upward. Thus the member of a mob is carried out of himself by the tide of emotion that sweeps over the mob; a single member of a marching army is caught up in the rhythm of a thousand other marchers, and feels himself part of a whole nation marching to war; many of the "little men" in totalitarian countries find their little lives—of small significance in themselves—lifted into great social significance by the group life and ritual of the new regime. If only small cogs in a machine, they are at least cogs in a *great* machine.

Now religious ritual is only a specialized form of the rituals found on every hand. It is special because of the specifically religious terms in which it unites its groups—particularly when the religious society has achieved a distinctive form apart from other social groupings. But the general means by which religious groups achieve and maintain their unity, and the social functioning of ritual in the religious group, are the same here as elsewhere in society.

For example, the religious ritual group is united physically; the participants all meet in one building or one place, at the same time, and in nearness to one another. Purely individual action of an independent sort is ruled out; convention demands conformity to the group pattern. And there are leaders whose specific duty it is to guide the individuals along a given ritual path and to center the attention of every individual, as far as possible, on one set of themes, in order to unite him with his fellows in a pattern of united ritual actions. That pattern of action itself, presumably known to all, is often one in which the group acts literally as a physical unit, speaking and gesturing simultaneously.

But the ritual group is united in other ways, especially if it is a religious one. The ritual pattern at every turn reminds participants that they are a special group, called out from the rest of mankind by a specific act of God on their behalf, by the example and power of a leader, by a new revelation, or for the purpose of achieving a salvation to be found nowhere else. The ritual in both symbolic and verbal form states the nature and terms of this group's difference from other groups, and reaffirms their peculiar destiny as a group. The name and deeds of the founder are often referred to; distinguishing doctrines are emphasized; the basic teachings of the group are symbolically set forth again and



again; both the past history and future hopes of the group are repeatedly stated, now in this manner, now in that.

Thus it is that the ritually united group is the most powerfully cohesive group that we know—provided that the ritual still continues to express the real beliefs and fulfill the basic needs of the participants. And the periodic repetition of the ritual is one of the most potent perpetuative devices any group can find. For every re-enactment of ritual indoctrinates the group as to the reason for its existence, its distinctive character, and its basic purposes. It welds the individuals within the group into intimate unity by the force of the emotion generated; particularly is this true if it deals with man's ultimate interests—his hope of salvation, his fear of death, his relationships to divine reality—as religious ritual usually does. Small wonder, therefore, that every group that seeks to achieve a spiritual unity—more binding in the long run than biological, geographical, or political cohesiveness—must create or find ritual patterns suitable to its need.

Lest our language here might be misleading, it would be well to note that groups very seldom have deliberately "created" a ritual, save in the few contemporary cases already noted; rituals usually just grow up, bit by bit, out of the common experiences and values of a group. Of course various individuals may have taken their deliberate parts in adding new elements to the ritual from time to time; yet they conceive themselves to be only expressing what is common to the group—not creating a new basic pattern; they are but channels for the expression of the group faith and manner of life. Once established, such patterns are tenacious; hence most people come to experience ritual as given them by a tradition, and even value it because it is ancient and unchanging.

There are any number of excellent historical illustrations of the manner in which *religious* ritual has served as a cohesive social force. The two we have chosen are the state Confucian cult of China, followed for centuries until the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty in 1912, and the ritual pattern of Judaism. One represents a state cult containing something of deliberate construction, which functioned in much the same way as the ritual pattern of the Roman Empire; the other typifies a total pattern of life, in which every action was to some extent a ritual, growing inevitably out of the historical experience of a small, close-knit racial-national-religious group.

#### a. *The Confucian State Worship*

The state-sponsored worship of China had deep roots in her ancient culture, and hence served a genuinely social function among the Chinese people, even though it always embodied some degree of deliberate elaboration, and in its later observances was widely separated from the current social and cultural values of the masses. The religious element of Chinese culture most readily expressed itself in the worship of the universe. Taoism and Confucianism were

but two different ways of indicating this same interest; the former was primarily a nature mysticism, and the latter a humanistic ethic that sought its guidance in patterning human relationships somewhere in the area of a general accord with the relationships observable in nature—especially as expressed by the ancient classical social patterns. Here in the formal state worship the main motifs of both appear in ritual form; the ritual is directed toward Heaven or nature, and also toward the nation's ancestral spirits.

Despite the great degree of ritual elaboration and cultural advancement that characterized Chinese civilization in general, there were strongly primitive elements evident throughout the public ceremonial. There was a definitely practical intent pervading it: Heaven must be successfully entreated, for only if Heaven was favorable could the emperor rule and China be peaceful and prosperous. The ritual, in near-magic fashion, was meticulously observed, lest any small particular go wrong and render the whole ineffective. So also plant and animal sacrifices were the main ritual stock-in-trade, while moral and spiritual values as such received little attention.

The central place for the observation of these rites was near the ancient city of Peking (modern Peiping). Just south of the city was the "Round Eminence," or the "Altar of Heaven," as it was variously known. And the emperor, who was the focal point in the relation of Heaven to the realm, naturally acted as the high priest. Following is one of the best available descriptions of the main annual celebration of the state cult of Heaven-ancestor worship:

This enormous altar [of Heaven], quite open to the sky, is composed of three circular marble terraces of different dimensions, placed one above the other, all provided with marble balustrades, and accessible by stairways, which exactly face the four chief points of the compass. . . . A wide area partly converted into a park with gigantic trees, lies around this altar, which is the greatest in the world. This area is surrounded by a high wall, affording room for a town of about forty or fifty thousand inhabitants.

On the longest night of the year the emperor proceeds to the altar, escorted by princes, grandees, officers, troops, to the number of many hundred; and many more assemble on the altar, to receive Heaven's son. Everybody is in richest ceremonial dress. The spectacle in the scanty light of large torches is most imposing. Every magistrate, minister, and mandarin has his assigned place on the altar and its terraces, or on the marble pavement which surrounds it.

On the upper terrace, a large perpendicular tablet, inscribed "Imperial Heaven, Supreme Emperor," stands in a shrine on the north side, and faces due south. In two rows, facing east and west, are shrines which contain tablets of the ancestors of the emperor. . . . Before each tablet various foods are placed, soup, meat, fish, dates, chestnuts, rice, vegetables, spirits, etc. . . . On the second terrace are tablets for the spirits of the sun, the moon, the Great Bear, the five planets, the twenty-



eight principal constellations, the host of stars, and the gods of winds, clouds, rain and thunder. Before these tablets are dishes and baskets with sacrificial articles. Cows, goats, and swine have been slaughtered for all these offerings; and during the solemnities, a bullock or heifer is burning on a pyre, as a special offering to high Heaven.

The emperor, who has purified himself for the solemnity by fasting, is led up to the altar by the southern flight of steps, which on both sides is crowded by dignitaries. Directors of the ceremonies guide him and loudly proclaim every act or rite which he has to perform. The spirit of Heaven is invited, by means of a hymn accompanied by sacred music, to descend and to settle on its tablet. Before the tablet, and subsequently before those of his ancestors, the emperor offers incense, jade, silk, broth, and rice-spirits. He humbly kneels and knocks his forehead against the pavement several times. A grandee reads a prayer in a loud voice, and several officials appointed for the duty, offer incense, silk, and spirits on the second terrace. . . . Finally the sacrificial gifts are carried away, thrown into furnaces and burned.<sup>7</sup>

There were other and ensuing sacrifices of somewhat less grandeur at other and lesser times and places. In the same park was another similar but smaller eminence where early in the new year sacrifices were made to Heaven to ensure a good year with sufficient rain. North of Peking was still another such altar, dedicated to Earth, where the emperor or his proxy would make offerings at the time of the summer solstice to guarantee the earth's fertility. And scattered through the empire—especially near large cities—were other altars to lesser spirits and eminent ancestors of important people, at which state officials from time to time offered appropriate sacrifices in much the same style as at the grand imperial ceremony, though on a smaller scale.

The grand ritual fell to pieces with the decay of the Manchu dynasty—it had ceased to express the current social and religious values of the Chinese people. As a function of the old and dying classical order of education and government, it became further and further removed from social and political realities with the passing years. When the 1912 political revolution destroyed the structure of the decrepit Manchu Empire at a touch, this grandiose religious superstructure crumbled along with it. Grass now grows over the altars of Heaven; they make fine picnic grounds for the populace, or provide a political rallying place for China's new masters.

#### b. *The Jewish Ritual Pattern*

A contrasting pattern of ritual structure is to be found in Judaism. It too was once celebrated in grand public fashion, with the king serving as high priest, and representing in his person the national unity. It had its temple, its sacrifices, and its priesthood; its music, its ritual, and its golden splendor in

<sup>7</sup> J. J. M. de Groot, *Religion in China*, Putnam, 1912, pp. 91 ff.

Solomon's temple. So much for some very superficial resemblances. But the further the Hebrew-Jewish pattern developed, the greater the contrast with the Chinese pattern became; indeed, even at the very beginning under Solomon, for all its splendor Hebrew temple worship in Jerusalem was never half as grand as the Chinese state cult. It was always comparatively simple in both furnishings and manner. Nor was it ever so purely a function of the state and its rulers; more and more it became a possession of the people and their spiritual leaders. And as it became more fully the possession of the people its structure altered.

The Jewish group is peculiar in that its total life pattern, down to the most minute regulations, can be called ritualistic—and ritualistic in a religious sense. This would most certainly be true of the traditional Orthodox Jewish pattern which endures up to the present time, though Conservative and Reform groups modify their practices considerably. Among no other people perhaps are all the factors of group consciousness, historical past, future destiny, manner of life, and religious faith, bound together in such indissoluble unity. This basic pattern of Jewish life and religion is, of course, contained in its Mosaic Law. Orthodox Judaism holds that the first five books of the Bible, which contain basic laws governing worship, social life, and ethics, are the words of Jehovah given to Moses which the good Jew is pledged by his everlasting Covenant to obey. That is the price, however large it may seem to outsiders—or even to himself in some moods—that he must pay to be one of God's chosen people.

Practically speaking, this means that all phases of the Jewish pattern of group life, down to the smallest detail, have been regarded as direct commands of God. Thus every single part of that pattern takes on a ritual quality; its performance is a set method by which the Jew serves God even in daily life, and the whole Jewish way of living is worship in the broadest sense. In this way are found such features as the following: the observance of the Sabbath (Friday sundown to Saturday sundown) by a rigid avoidance of work of all sorts, total journeying shortened to less than a mile on that day, by refusal to light a fire in one's dwelling or cook food, and other like regulations; the circumcision of the male child and male convert; eating only "clean" or kosher food, such as the flesh of animals that part the hoof and chew the cud (cattle, goats, sheep) while avoiding those that did not (swine, horses, camels); refusal to wear garments of different fibers simultaneously; unwillingness to intermarry with other groups—and so on through a long and varied list of items that have separated Jew from Gentile for many centuries. Such physical observances, Judaism holds, are not mere fastidiousness or snobbery, but symbols of God's call to a disciplined and holy way of life to fit His chosen people for their great spiritual responsibilities as heralds of the one true God.

Besides this *generally* ritualistic character of its life, Judaism also has its spe-



cific ritual seasons. There is the weekly sabbath synagogue worship, which is much like a Protestant service of the simpler sort. And there are the great feasts scattered throughout the year: New Year or Rosh Hashanah, and the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur, in September-October; the Feast of Tabernacles, in the later autumn; the Feast of Lights, near Christmas, and Purim a little later; Passover, near Easter; and Pentecost, fifty days afterward in the early summer.

Now two features are common to all these festivals and to some extent to the sabbath worship as well. One is that they are in part family festivals, to be conducted about the home hearth. The other is that they are full of reminders of the historical career of the Hebrew people in Biblical times: Passover celebrates deliverance from Egypt; Pentecost, Moses' giving the Ten Commandments; Tabernacles, the sojourn in the desert between Egypt and Canaan; Chanukah or Lights commemorates the purification of the temple in 162 B.C. after Antiochus Epiphanes had desecrated it; and Purim, the deliverance from the anti-Semitic persecutions in Persia described in the book of Esther.

A more detailed account of the Passover service will illustrate this race-history-religion quality of much Jewish ritual. Passover ("night of guarding") refers to the safe passing over the Hebrew homes in Egypt by the angel of death during the last and greatest of the plagues called forth by Moses. As a whole it is a sort of Jewish Independence Day, since its original events led to the liberation of the Hebrews from Egypt. For generations it was observed by a temple service—a splendid festival of some eight days' duration; but since the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 it has become increasingly a family service in addition to its synagogal observance.

As far as the family celebration of Passover, the Seder or "Order of Service for the [first] Night of Passover," is the most important, and thoroughly Jewish in character.<sup>8</sup> Seder is not purely devotional, but combines family festival fun and religious solemnity, and in its present form dates from the 2nd century A.D. At its beginning the family sits down to a table with a special Passover platter at its head, which contains three matzoth (special wheat cakes or wafers), reminiscent of the unleavened bread eaten on the occasion of the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12); bitter herbs, symbolic of the bitterness of slavery; a bone, as a reminder of the lamb offered in the ancient temple; a roasted egg, symbolic of the freewill temple offering accompanying the sacrifice; haroseth, a mixture of apples, nuts, cinnamon, and wine, to simulate the mortar the Hebrew slaves used for their bricks in Egypt; and parsley or watercress, suggestive of ancient Seder banquet usages. Besides eating some of each of these foods, each partici-

<sup>8</sup> This description relies for its materials mainly on the March, 1952, issue (Vol. 9, No. 2) of *Christian Friends*, published by Anti-Defamation League, 327 So. LaSalle St., Chicago, Ill.

pant also drinks a little out of each of four cups of wine, in memory of God's four promises of redemption found in Exodus 6:6-7 (often unfermented raisin wine is used).

Each of these kinds of food and drink is partaken of, bit by bit, each in its proper order, with a part of one matzoth reserved to the very last. And woven in with the symbolic eating is the ritual of the occasion, whose purpose is to explain the events Passover commemorates. The key to the whole is perhaps found in the four questions asked by the head of the house early in the course of the ritual meal:

- (1) Why is this night different from all other nights? . . . Why, on this night, do we eat only unleavened bread?
- (2) Why, on this night, do we eat especially bitter herbs?
- (3) Why, on this night, do we dip them [the herbs] in salt water and harosseth?
- (4) Why, on all other nights, may we sit at the table either erect or leaning; but on this night we recline?

The group responds that all this is done because God delivered them out of Egypt. Four people, taking the parts of four sons—the earnest, the indifferent, the simple, and the ignorant—make prescribed responses to the above questions; and in the end the leader—usually the father of the family—tells them the story of the Exodus. With further drinkings, eatings, rejoicings, and prayers, the meal continues, ending with this prayer:

Our Passover Seder is closed and completed,  
 Its ordered tradition in honor repeated.  
 Were our merit large when the rite was begun,  
 Be it no less when 'tis ended and done.  
 Thou Pure One who dwellest where eye hath not mounted,  
 O lift up the heads of Thy children uncounted.  
 Speedily may they, the seed of Thy choice,  
 In Zion delivered exult and rejoice.

Note what has occurred in the Seder ritual. The family has been made to feel both its oneness as a family, and its solidarity with the racial-religious group; it has been carried back in imagination to the long-ago events clustered about the beginnings of the historical and religious career of the Jewish people; it is made to feel the great importance attaching to the careful observance of the Jewish pattern of life; and it looks forward with hope toward a final deliverance into Zion—whether Palestine on earth or the Heavenly City. Thus are history, religion, and the Jewish way of life imprinted indelibly on the minds and emotions of all those present, and the continuity of the group with its own historic past guaranteed for at least another generation.



## Chapter XIX

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### RITUAL DEVELOPMENT

#### *Introductory*

Thus far we have observed something of the meaning and social function of ritual in the religious group. Now the social function of ritual remains largely unaltered during the course of cultural development, as far as its value and worth to group life are concerned; but its *content* and *meaning* change considerably with the growth and development of religion and culture.

One interesting feature of this change is the progressive refining—almost refining away—of the elements of ritual. For the primitive, ritual is a full-bodied affair. The primitive worship-dance, for example, is a blend of acrobatic feat, artistic expression (both in costume and performance), intense religious devotion, and practical work for tribal welfare; thus it is a full-scale exercise of body, mind, and emotion. In the course of religious development much of the overt physical activity is sloughed off, so that some religious ritual involves little more than a quiet religious sitting, now and again interspersed with a very mild variety of standings or kneelings. The vigorous primitive symbolism is usually refined into more abstract and intellectualized forms, often being reduced almost completely to mere word forms. On the whole, the primitive would probably find the worship of more developed religions a rather anemic affair.

It is interesting to notice in passing that there have been many reactions against this drastic refining of the forms of religious expression—even from within religious groups themselves. The elaborate and colorful ritual found in many “high church” religions is one rejection of such refinement—even though its patterns be subtle and mild compared to the primitive’s crude strength. Certain orgiastic cults that sprang up in Russian Christianity and occasionally in other parts of Christendom represent another such reaction. India’s cults of devotional faith, which turned away from the abstruse mysticism of classical Brahmanism to an intense emotional expression of religious love; Moslem mysticism, which expressed itself in richly devotional poetry; and Protestant revivalism, are still other instances of religious rebellion against the progressive

impoverishment of ritual forms. And it is very interesting to notice how modern American Protestantism of the nonrevivalistic persuasion is experimenting with the more colorful sanctuary, the more liturgical service, and even religious dance forms, as compensation for its Reformation rejection of Catholic ritual extravagance.

More generally, we may say that ritual develops in the direction of giving an increased, even a central, importance to those factors that on the primitive level were nonpractical, incidental, or even almost accidental by-products. To be sure, something of the "practical" (*i.e.*, materially effective) value of ritual must remain in the religious conception of ritual at whatever level we find it, if it is to fulfill its vital function. It must still serve the purpose of communicating to the worshiping group some sense of the power of the more-than-human reality with which religion seeks to make contact, or else it will become a merely nominal procedure that will die out or be by-passed in favor of some more convincing if cruder rite.

For example, devout souls do not entirely cease to pray for food, safety, and peace even at the highest level of religion. "Give us this day our daily bread," runs a sentence from one famous prayer which came out of a highly developed and sensitive religious consciousness. Yet the nature of the practicality that worship serves has considerably changed from its primitive form. The petition for daily bread is set in the context of other prayers for God's will to be done on earth, and of still others for the power of forgiveness. The proportion of spiritual qualities (nonmaterial goods) sought by worship, in relation to the material benefits, constantly increases. The attainment of moral virtue and personal spiritual perfection become central goals; the concern of the prayer reaches out to fellow men, even to those who are hostile and unforgiving; fellowship with the divine, rather than tangible benefit, becomes a predominant purpose in the ritual observance. In brief, religious ritual shares in the general ethical and spiritual development of the total life of religion from its more primitive to its more advanced stages—even though perhaps more slowly than some other of its elements.

The rationalization of ritual likewise occurs along with the general rationalizing process in religion and culture—though again more slowly. In primitive ritual there are few specific statements of belief; but in the course of religious development this is gradually changed—particularly among those religions given to stressing their doctrinal elements. The Moslem call to prayer five times a day explicitly states the basic doctrine of Islam: "Come to prayer. There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet." Orthodox and Roman Catholic Masses state Christian doctrine in the words of the priestly ritual and the choral themes. And Protestants, in their marked effort to distinguish themselves



creedally from each other, have incorporated rather extended statements of faith in their regular rituals, and in many quarters strongly emphasize the preaching of doctrinal sermons in the context of public worship.

Yet actual specific ritual change is often slow and indirect, reflecting little of current doctrinal change. To be sure, the theologizing of Christendom's early centuries found its way into Christian ritual in abundant measure and rather rapidly on the whole. But that was because this was the formative period for that ritual and for theology as well; since then ritual structures have changed much less frequently and radically. For when the myth—which was in primitive religion a living part of the ritual—is made the subject of intellectual analysis and thus the beginning of theological system, it means that the intellectual advance of religion is separated from its ritualistic forms. Each then tends to go its separate way within the structure of religion, without immediate effect on the other. Theology may seek to meet and deal with all the new intellectual and cultural factors, while rituals seek to maintain themselves unaltered. In fact, Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches pride themselves on the historic age of their present ritual structures. And even Protestants, who have been experimenting with worship forms for several hundred years, have often tried to go back to absolutely primitive Christian sources for their patterns, in order that they might worship according to the most ancient of all ways, that of Christ and the apostles, before that worship was “corrupted” by later Orthodox and Roman Catholic additions.

The reasons for this ritual conservatism are perhaps not hard to understand. One is the persistence of the primitive belief that ritual may not be altered or done carelessly if it is to be effective. Even though the ritualist within a highly developed (*i.e.*, “advanced”) religion might deny such a belief if explicitly charged with it, all his instinctive tendencies as ritualist point in that direction. Holy ritual must not be altered, for somehow such alteration might reduce its worth. Then there is the natural human conservatism, which feels most at home with familiar usages. And in religion particularly it is in the area of ritual usage that such factors of familiarity are most keenly felt to be of great value—often even more than with regard to doctrine; ritual most tangibly gives a distinctive “feel” to one pattern of religious practice as contrasted with another. There is also the fact that the ancient ritual may have caught something of the classical essence of a particular expression of faith, and may communicate in its performance the grandeur and majesty of the faith better than any merely spontaneous outpourings would be able to do, no matter how fervent. Its use may guarantee the worshiper something of beauty and grace in the pattern of worship independently of particular talents—or lack of them—on the part of the presiding official.

Whatever the reasons, the unchanging quality of ritual forms is one of the outstanding features of religious history; ritual forms respond slowly to change. Where they are as much cultural and social as religious—as when religious and natural groupings coincide—they may change only when the whole cultural and social pattern is altered or destroyed. But where religious groups have become distinctive, and have elaborated their specific ritual patterns about their own centers of thought and tradition, the ritual usages may become largely separated from cultural climates; and they may remain unaltered over longer periods than any other type of ritual that we know. The more elaborate and comprehensive the ritual pattern is, the more true this is likely to be. The ritual becomes a firmly fixed and sizable subculture, whose unchanged persistence through millennia only enhances its value to the religious group by which it is used, though it may seem to those without to be the essence of the archaic and static.

### 1. *Contrasting Ritual Types*

We turn now to two examples of ritual development that may illustrate the pattern we have indicated—both from the Christian tradition. They represent two extreme but widely typical religious tendencies in attitude and practice with regard to ritual: the Greek Orthodox pattern is ancient and intricate; the Quaker worship is a distinct effort at the avoidance of all possible ritual. The Greek is perhaps the more usual pattern of development in religious history—one of growing complexity; but the Quaker is a type of the almost-as-frequent reaction against ritualism in the interests of a more spiritual and inward faith. This pro- and antiritualism is indeed a basic part of the vital process of development in the life of all the higher religions.

#### a. *The Greek Orthodox Liturgy*

The Greek Orthodox Catholic liturgy, used predominantly in Russia and the Balkan countries, is a classic example of an ancient and elaborate ritual structure that has remained essentially unaltered for centuries. It is similar to the Roman Catholic, though more richly ornate, and with somewhat different emphases. Through long usage it has achieved the majesty and splendor of an artistic masterpiece. It is characterized by its wealth of symbolic detail and its many-phased appeal to the worshiper; in every part it seeks to set forth the Orthodox faith in its most dramatic and effective form. It is a world apart from other worlds—beautiful, colorful, exciting; it is the world of high, sacramental religion, in which the beauty of the ritual is of greatest value in itself, and its efficacy is both potent and mysterious.

The Orthodox temple, with all its appointments, is unbelievably rich in the



symbolisms of the faith. The temple itself usually takes either the form of a cross, or is shaped like a ship to symbolize the ark of salvation that will bear every believer through the storms of life safe into heaven. Within the sanctuary proper the emphasis is laid on color and ornateness. The walls are frequently covered with sacred paintings or bas-relief statuary. At the eastern end are the altar and the throne of the priest, partly hidden from the congregation by an openwork screen decorated with the images (icons) of saints and angels. The area about the altar represents the heavenly sphere, whose blessings are available to men only through the offices of the clergy; it is a holy of holies, sanctified by the presence of the elements and apparatus of the Eucharist. The robed choirs, which are placed immediately in front of the screen, symbolize the heavenly host of angels and saved men in glory.

The main purpose of the Orthodox ritual itself is to present the life of Christ as a drama of man's salvation. It is in three parts: first, the Office of Oblation, in which the elements of the Eucharist are prepared behind the screen; second, the Liturgy of Catechumens (learners), consisting mainly of the reading of the Scriptures and exhortations; third, the climactic Liturgy of the Faithful, in which the worshipers partake of the Eucharistic elements.

The preparation of the Eucharistic bread is elaborately symbolical. The two altar cloths, one dull and one bright—to represent the grave clothes of Christ and the glory of his resurrection—are taken off the altar, together with the star-shaped device that kept them from touching the bread. On each loaf of communion bread—now exposed—there is an imprinted cross. The presiding priest slices out the part of the loaf containing the imprint with his sacramental spear, which symbolizes the spear that pierced Jesus' side at the crucifixion; each of his four strokes is accompanied by an assistant's repetition of an appropriate Scripture passage. Then in the same fashion the rest of the bread is cut into particles, representing the Virgin Mary, the "ranks" of the apostles, prophets, and saints, then one for the ruler of the nation, others for the Orthodox archbishops, and others for the living and the dead. All the bread is transferred to a side table, and the crumbs are picked up with a sponge—symbolical of the vinegar-soaked one offered Jesus on the cross.

The second part—the Liturgy of Catechumens—is featured by the presentation and reading of the Epistles and Gospel. The Scriptures are borne out of the altar area by assistants through one of the three doors in the screen, accompanied by the choir's chanting of the Beatitudes. This, called the Little Entrance, symbolizes the opening of the heavens on Jesus at his baptism and his appearing to teach men. Meantime incense is being spread about, to inspire the worshipers to reverent attention to the reading of Scripture and the words of the priest that may follow.

The ritual's high point comes in the third period (Liturgy of the Faithful), at the moment of the Great Entrance. The bread and wine are taken from the table beside the altar, and borne out through the screen in a processional by assistant priests into the presence of the congregation, and then back through the center door to the presiding priest, who places them upon the altar. He then blesses the elements, and—as with Roman Catholics—this blessing “transubstantiates” them into the body and blood of Christ. Then one by one the faithful commune, are blessed, and then dismissed.

It is obvious that such a ritual is loved by its adherents for many reasons. A worshiper may soak in the flavor of the glory of God through every pore; there are for the eye the beauty of color and form in the sanctuary decorations, the robes of priests and choir, the altar cloths, the candles, the stylized gestures of the priests, and the majestic processions. For the ear there are the sound of the rolling cadences of the spoken service, and the splendor of the choral responses. For the nostril there is the odor of the incense. And, standing for prayers of rejoicing, kneeling for adoration and prayers of penitence, joining from time to time in the vocal responses, continually repeating the sign of the cross, the worshiper participates also with his bodily motions in the worship of God. Small wonder that this pattern of ritual has maintained a strong spirit of devotion to its classic beauty among many thousands for fifteen centuries or more.

#### b. *Quaker Reaction Against Liturgy*

A liturgical pattern like the Orthodox one, however, always raises up an opposition to itself within the faith. Its enshrining of ancient thought patterns, largely isolated from cultural changes, creates a problem for its worshipers. How shall they participate whole-souledly in such forms, and also remain citizens of their contemporary world? what connection is there between the two? The more elastic spirits among them will find ways to accommodate; they will indirectly modify the ancient ritual in their use of it; they will interpret it for themselves “spiritually”—that is, symbolically rather than literally. So do the four corners of the earth come to mean the four directions of the compass; Adam and Eve will be not actual persons, but symbols of human origins. Or else they compartmentalize their thinking, and rigidly separate the sphere of worship from that of their worldly thinking; thus, to whichever group they belong, they will continue to use the ancient ritual.

Others will reject such rituals outright and turn to nonreligion or irreligion. But still others—and it is these in whom we are here interested—will reject the ancient liturgical structure, but not the faith it seeks to express. They will proclaim the dead externality of elaborate rite, and call for the true worship of the



heart, for the spontaneous inspiration of divine power rather than formalized ceremonial. These are the protestants who rise up perpetually in every religious faith when highly formalized patterns take over; who believe that the connection between the liturgical expression of religious faith and its daily practice should be closer; who may even believe that elaborate ritual more often defeats than assists the inner religious life.

And in accord with their protest they create new religious rituals. The purpose of such ritual is not to achieve the quality of a work of art, but to be a simple, direct way in which all men may achieve fellowship with each other and with God; for is not this the *main* purpose of worship? The worshiper after this style realizes the crudity and uneven quality of his ritual usages, perhaps, but does not care as long as they seem vitally real to him, and effectively span the gap between the sacred and the ordinary. Their very barrenness of external symbolism strips the spiritual life to its essentials, and makes it less easy, he believes, to hide one's lack of devotion behind a formal façade of elaborate ceremonial. Such have been the marks of the protestant in every religious culture.

To make the contrast as wide as possible, we shall use for an example of this antiritualistic tendency, a group that has perhaps gone the furthest of any religious group in casting aside ritual forms and has yet remained a worshipping group—namely, the Quakers or Friends. One might think that the Buddhist, or any other mystic meditating in solitude without the help of even a meeting-house or any visible symbol, would be a better example than the Quaker. But the former is not a member of a ritual *group*, which we are here considering, whereas the Quaker does seek to maintain a worshipping fellowship—even though at the opposite end of the religious spectrum from the Orthodox Catholic.

The Friends' style of worship is the result of a deliberate effort to renounce all possible external forms in religious worship, and be sheerly, directly dependent on the operation of God's grace in the human heart. In its classic form it is severely simple. It rejects a regular ministry; for its originator, George Fox, found too many ministers in 17th-century England preaching each Sunday simply because their schedules called for it and because they must earn their living—not because they were filled with the Spirit or had anything important to say. It rejects the elaborately decorated sanctuary, with all its adornments and aids to worship—including organs and choirs—as hindrances to true worship. A plain hall without stained glass, hangings, or perhaps even a speaker's platform, is all that is required; it is called very simply a "meetinghouse."

The service itself is even more severely simple, if possible, than its surroundings. Ideally its basic pattern is that of devout quiet; a silence filled with meditation and prayer and the shining of the Inner Light in each heart. (One might

call it group mysticism.) If the Light shines brightly enough, and the Spirit stirs strongly enough within the heart, let the brother or sister, whoever he be, arise and speak forth whatever word of exhortation, comfort, warning, or concern may be given him; if not, let him hold his peace; better a reverent silence than an uninspired word. Even those sacraments which nearly all other Protestant Christian groups allow—baptism and the Lord's Supper—are here disallowed. Let the baptism be that of the Spirit, not of water, and the eating be of God's spiritual bounty, not physical creatures of bread and wine; this position the Quaker maintains lest he depend on rites and not on God, or lest he take the physical symbols to be the spiritual reality.

Could there be greater contrast than between the Orthodox and the Quaker patterns—incense, images, choral anthems, processions, versus the bare silence of plainly dressed people in a plain room? Yet even here is a certain ritualistic residue. There is the building or room in which the group meets, that makes them something of a physical unit by shutting them in together and apart from others. Its very plainness is a symbol of the expectancy of the Divine Presence. The silence becomes a rich symbol in its own right, one into which every worshiper may read his own meanings. As a member of a small minority group he is impressed with the need of fellowship with his fellow worshiper, and with the preciousness of that fellowship. And still further, the Quaker is within the Christian tradition, and is nourished by it in his worship, far more than he may realize. He reads the Christian Bible, and is confirmed in his faith by the private practice of prayer in the Christian manner. In a word, he lives in the context of the historic Christian inspiration, which keeps the deliverances of his Inner Light from being completely characterless or totally subjective, however little of its theological content he may put into formal ritual expression.

Yet such externally meager ritual demands much of the participants—more than most people are able to give. It is perhaps as near the vanishing point of ritual procedure as one can get, and still call it ritual in the basic sense of a group activity. Hence it is not surprising that many Friends' meetings have modified their pattern of worship into something still relatively simple yet more like that of other Protestant groups: a plain service of hymns, prayers, and Scripture reading, with a sermon given by the regular professional minister of the church.

### c. *Summary*

The large majority of religious rituals, in whatever faith we find them, are located somewhere between the two extremes represented by Quaker and Orthodox Catholic—neither as simple as the Quaker nor as ornate as the Catholic. It should be said in passing, however, that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are



peculiar in their *frequent regularity* of worship; they alone have the weekly cycle of a day of worship by a regular congregation. Other faiths—except perhaps for a few splinter groups—do not have a stated membership that regularly attends ritual services at a given place and at a given hour. In these others there are seasonal festivals and periodic celebrations to which many come. And the priest may go through a stated ceremonial—as in Hindu or Buddhist temple—at given hours; but he does not necessarily expect a particular group to be present. Individual worshipers will wander in and out as they please, most of their worship being private. Thus the ritual patterns of these faiths are primarily those for the home group or occasional festival, rather than the standard practice of a ritually unified congregation. And to this extent the ritual groupings among them are less distinctive and important.

Aside from this difference, we may note some general similarities in type of ritual among religions—whether those rituals be practiced regularly or spasmodically. One might say, in fact, that among the great major faiths we can find examples all up and down the scale of complexity of ritual; that even within some single faiths there are great divergencies. For example, Christianity has, on the liturgical right, its Ethiopian Coptic Church, Roman and Orthodox Catholic Churches, and Anglican and Lutheran communions. In the middle, with moderate “low church” ritualism, stand the largest number of Protestant church groups. And toward the Quaker left are many of the small revivalist sects, which follow a very loose-jointed order of service that can be interrupted at any moment by spontaneous prayer or testimony.

In the non-Christian Orient, Shintoism in Japan (till 1945), and the ancient Confucian state worship in China—both of which we have already described—were much alike in their common highly ritualistic nature. Most of Islam and Judaism, on the other hand, would belong in the middle grouping of the relatively simple ritual. Buddhism and Hinduism, due to the immense variety of practices carried on by them in different countries and sects, have representatives at both extremes and in the middle as well. Tibetan Buddhism is very high-churchly, as is the high Brahmin Hindu both in his family and temple religious ritual. Yet these same faiths contain other rituals that grade all the way down to that sheer individualism of mystical religious practice which ostensibly belongs to no ritual group at all, but pursues its devotions in solitude and silence—though according to an ancient traditional pattern, it should be added.

## 2. *Individual Worship*

This last statement brings us to a final feature of ritual expression which any well-balanced portrait of religious ritual practice must recognize—that of indi-

vidual religious devotion. This element becomes increasingly important to the growth of religion, even in its group ritual expression, and is both cause and effect of the larger role played by the individual in developing religious life. The primitive has little interior life, as we have noted; which also means that he has little interior religion—religious practice for him is almost completely the public ritual. Prayer or worship is all on the surface, something one does only in company with others.

But as religious life develops, and religion more and more turns its attention to moral and intellectual factors, the interior spiritual life becomes of major importance. As soon as terms like "goodness," "truth," "justice," "love," and "mercy" begin to appear in a religion's ritual language, we may be sure that its worshipers are beginning to think in inward and personal terms about religion, and that they are searching for, or have found, patterns of devotion that can be practiced solitarily. These may well be in addition to the public practice, which still holds the main place; but they are nonetheless obviously and importantly present.

So marked is the development of this aspect of religion in its upper reaches that our usual conception of religion—as was suggested at the beginning of this part—is primarily in terms of what a man does with his solitariness, or that of a private relation between Divine Reality and the individual. Some religious groups, like Hinduism and Buddhism, have so strongly emphasized the individuality of man's approach to Reality that the group consciousness within religion has been greatly weakened (this in part accounts for the fact that there are no true church organizations among them). Buddhism, in fact, began as a completely individualistic search for salvation; for it was held that no one, no matter how holy, could help another person on his way. But even among those faiths where group worship is strongly emphasized, individual and private worship forms have paralleled the growth of group ritual. Protestant Christianity in particular has majored in calling for the private practice of religious devotion.

This does not end the matter, however; for the relation between private and public worship is a peculiar one—each depends very substantially on the other. It is perhaps impossible to say which is the more fundamentally dependent. No doubt historic public ritual patterns produce the actual forms of private worship. A Hindu, Moslem, Christian, Buddhist, and Jew, each worshipping privately, would worship differently, because each would mirror his own public tradition in his private practice. In so far as each used outward gestures or forms, we should find him expressing the traditional group patterns: the Jew would pray in standing position with his prayer cap on his head; the Christian kneeling and bareheaded—perhaps with rosary or prayer book if a Catholic; the Moslem on his prayer rug, facing toward Mecca, touching forehead to the



rug as he knelt; the Hindu and Buddhist seated in cross-legged meditative posture.

Even the inward quality of the worship would be largely determined by the traditional forms of the respective faith groups. Each would use in his meditation the name of his God—and perhaps the Buddhist no name at all. The temper of the prayer, the goals sought, while in general the same, would vary from worshiper to worshiper, according to his distinctive tradition. The Buddhist would seek the peace of detachment from the world about him; the Hindu might pray for a vision of Rama; the Moslem would acknowledge the greatness and compassion of the Almighty; the Christian might pray for more Christlike character; and the Jew for patience to endure his sufferings and light to understand his people's strange fate.

The point is that the public community of worship, both in outward form and idea, prescribes the inner nature of private worship. Private worship learns its ritual language from its faith group and tradition, just as a child learns the language, in which he later thinks his most private thoughts, from the society of which he is a member. No matter how independent of the outward forms of religion the worshiper may believe himself to be, he is thus nourished by them. And quite interestingly, it has been the Catholic Church in Christendom, with its strong emphasis on group worship and organizational authority, which has produced more saints and manuals of private devotion than Protestantism, with all its individualistic emphasis.

On the other hand, however, even group rituals are produced by individuals. No one great ritual pattern is as the rule the work of any one individual, of course, though undoubtedly outstanding men have greatly influenced the particular pattern adopted at especially formative periods. The Anglican Book of Prayer owes much to the genius of Archbishop Cranmer, though he did not create these elements out of nothing. But at any rate it has been individuals, known or unknown, who have put their private religious thoughts into public ritual forms. And, as we have observed, those rituals are most satisfying that continue to express the individual's yearnings and make him feel alone with God—even though he be in the midst of a worshipping group each of whom also seeks aloneness with God.

Nor is even this quite all. Not only is the ritual form itself the result of an individual expression of religious devotion; its effectiveness as a means of public worship depends quite as much on the quality of the devotion of the individual worshiper as on its beauty of form; public rituals cannot rise too far above the quality of the private religious living achieved by the participants. The public ritual's majesty and beauty may enlarge horizons and stimulate a new personal religious awareness, but in the end it can accomplish little more of

spiritual worth than the individual participant's devotion and understanding allow it to.

Thus the ritual community and the individual worshiper fructify each other in their complementary efforts. The community is necessary to the individual—he would have no devotional language either in public or private without its patterns. When he attempts to cut himself off from some such community he only hides from himself the source of his “independent” spiritual resources. But neither can the ritual community go for long without the private devotion of its individual members; their sincerity and the depth of their faith inject life into what would otherwise be dead external forms; they change mere worship-form into genuine worship-reality. The private devotions of the faithful are indeed the life blood of the worshiping community; and their increasing use, as an invaluable support to its own ministrations, is the ultimate goal of all its public ritual.



## PART III

### RELIGION AS SALVATION

# SECTION I

## ORIENTATION

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### *Chapter XX*

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#### WHAT IS SALVATION?

##### *1. Salvation: The Group and the Individual*

We have been considering religion in terms of its social manifestations. We have observed that at some levels of social culture, religious and natural groups coincide with each other in almost every way. But it is also true that religion has progressively achieved more distinctive types of association for itself, growing up around a religious, rather than a biological or social, group center. A factor of importance in all its social structuring has been the strongly cohesive ritual that religion has been able to contribute to all group relations it has affected.

Another major area in the religious life now calls for consideration—namely, its quality as an individual and deeply personal quest. For groups are made up of individuals; religiously the individual plays an increasingly greater role in the community as faith and culture progress; and at the highest level of religious development the individual's inner life of devotion becomes one of the most characteristic and valuable forms of religious expression—we may say that the genuinely religious individual has emerged. He is now of worth in his own religious right; the quality and length of his existence are of importance; the nature of his personal character is of consequence. No longer is religion to be thought of exclusively as a group pattern of action, which rather mechanically follows tradition; nor is the group itself to be considered as a rather instinctive association of human units. *Religion is here become a way of salvation for individual men, and the religious society a voluntary commonwealth of individuals unitedly engaged in the quest of that salvation.*

Now to view religion as a search for salvation gives us a different perspective



on those materials with which we have been dealing in the past chapters; in fact, it will open up a whole new field of study. For in studying religion as a social phenomenon we considered it *en masse*—from the “sociological outside,” so to speak. We asked what group patterns religion created in human cultures; and what elements it added to those it did not create, but associated itself with. But here we shall observe religion from the viewpoint of the individual who participates in it—from the “religious inside,” as it might be termed. We shall try to understand what sort of salvation he hopes to gain through religion, how he hopes to gain it, and how he feels about it.

It is also true that when we view religions as ways of salvation we are dealing with their more highly special and individualized products. Religions differ most essentially as their conceptions of salvation differ. The divergent ways of salvation we find among religions very frequently represent the highly individualized insights of religious geniuses—the prophets, saints, or seers. Later these insights become institutionalized in the immense social structures of ritual, organization, and society that are built around them; but in the beginning they were new insights, distinctive patterns of personal religious experience. The founder of a new faith offers a new way of salvation to men, growing out of, but differing significantly from, their already accepted patterns. Thus arose Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and a host of varieties within them. Hence there is something intensely personal about religion as salvation; it is not just a group phenomenon, but the way in which some great soul once conceived the manner in which *he* had come to salvation; and it may well be the way in which you or I, following his leadership, hope to achieve *our* salvation. Such, at least, would be his desire.

The consideration of religion in this light will somewhat shift the center of attention from its primitive to its more developed forms. This is not because primitive religion is not also a way of salvation; that is precisely what religion is at all levels—it is the essence of it to be a way of salvation. Rather it is because the quest for salvation comes to full flower only on the upper levels of religious development. On the primitive level, for instance, the individual is largely lost in the group; he is readily sacrificed for group welfare; even his possible continued existence as an ancestral spirit after his death is considered of importance only as it affects the fortunes of the living earthly community. Only on the higher levels, when genuine religious individuality has made its appearance, is he considered as having significant worth apart from his group—as worthy of salvation for his own sake. Thus it is no accident that the great patterned ways of salvation—which include in their scope both the individual and the society, both this life and the next—appear only at the summit of religious development.

But in considering salvation as something that has a highly individualistic quality, we are by no means suggesting that we are now about to turn our backs on the group; that can never be done in religion. We shall again and again be dealing with the group and its tradition in the field of salvation. Indeed, the ways of salvation we shall be surveying are structured techniques offered by the group to the individual. For example, when we speak of the manner in which a Moslem, Christian, or Hindu seeks salvation, we are using the name of a community and tradition. As an individual seeking salvation, each person will seek it in the terms some *group* furnishes him. As before remarked, even his most private devotions or most inward search for salvation will be given form and content by a religious community or tradition. Indeed, the very desire for salvation itself and the awareness of one's personal need for it come to each individual seeker by such a communal route.

In discussing salvation, what we seek to understand, then, is neither a purely social activity nor an individual quest apart from each other, but the dynamic relation of the two. "Salvation" is a name for that relation. It is the community presenting a way of action to the individual for his acceptance—but also the individual acceptance of that way. It is the interpretation of the religious community and its tradition as channels by which the individual, and sometimes society as well, achieve their destiny. It is religion actively at work, according to a pattern in which individual and social interests are progressively intermingled and fulfilled.

Thus salvation is no simple matter; like everything else in religion it is a complex affair of many strands. To be sure, it is simple enough to say that religions propose to save men, and that men propose to be saved by religions—that is what religions are in business for. But when we go on to specify more narrowly what that salvation means, we begin to see the truly complicated nature of the subject. For instance: From what specific evils does religion propose to rescue men? and to what specific goods or gains save them? Further, who is to be saved, a few—and if so, which few—or everyone? When and where is this salvation to take place? And last but not least, by what means are men to be saved? In his *Man's Quest for Salvation*<sup>1</sup> Charles S. Braden has pointed out in how many different ways different religions answer these questions, and how even within the same faith widely variant proposals are made. Religions are indeed one in calling men to salvation, but many in what they offer them under that name.

<sup>1</sup> Harper & Brothers, 1949. Some of the materials used in this chapter were suggested by this volume.



## 2. *Salvation: Its Goals and Methods*

Before plunging into a detailed description of the great classic ways of salvation presented by the major religions of our time, we shall need tentatively to gauge the range and nature of our field of inquiry. This may be done by rather provisionally and roughly answering some of the questions suggested in the paragraph above. We naturally ask, therefore: What is it that religions propose to save men *from*? And the answer is: every sort of thing and condition distasteful to man. There have been, in the full course of religious history, charms and prayers to save people from baldness, premature old age, ugliness, sickness, childlessness, sterility, starvation, thirst, physical dangers of all kinds, and sudden death in all its forms. Men have prayed also for a more spiritual sort of deliverance from worldliness, selfishness, envy, hatred, pride, covetousness, lustfulness, doubt, and a host of like evil qualities. There are still other items which we might call the other-worldly dangers of evil or malign spiritual influences—such as Satan's power, God's wrath, and the perils of hell.

The reverse side of the coin is obvious. Men have prayed to receive—*i.e.*, be saved *to*—physical beauty and health, long life, many children, rich crops, successful hunting, prosperous business, safe return from journeys, recovery from illness, reciprocation of love, and victory in battle. They have prayed for love, unselfishness, faith, serenity, courage, spiritual disposition, purity of thought, and constancy of devotion. In the other-worldly area they have prayed for the revelation of God's will, the protection of good spirits, God's favor, and the life eternal in heaven.

What then distinguishes religious salvation from other salvations?—for do not men seek to deliver themselves from many of these same ills, and to achieve the same goods, by magic, skill, science, and politics? The answer is yes, but—For there is a basic difference in the *means* used by religion and by all other disciplines of salvation; this is obvious from its lowest level on up. Religion does not seek to achieve salvation, of whatever sort, by direct means, but by indirect; not by mechanical techniques or physically effective efforts, but by relating oneself properly to the ultimate powers that govern the course of the universe. To be sure, a prayer may be direct in the sense that it is a request for a specific thing; but it is to be answered in the end by the action of the one prayed to, not by the physical force or exertions of the pray-er. Direct effort, and prayer for the same desired end, may occur, of course, as supplementary to each other. But the point is that there is this reference to a Third Party, so to speak, without whose aid the end cannot be gained, no matter how hard one works directly. And this is true of the religious approach to salvation—whether we speak of tangible physical evils and goods, or the intangibles of moral and spiritual evil and good.

There is a further distinction between religious and other salvations: religions as a rule add a qualitative difference. They do indeed seek the most crassly material benefits, as we have noted; but they often give even to these their own peculiar interpretations, besides adding their own peculiar items. We might say that religions add what we have called the *other-worldly* quality to salvation; they seek to achieve salvation in its most ultimate possible form. Religions seek to save men not only from the temporary evils of physical distress, for example, but also—and perhaps mainly—from ultimate spiritual hazards, like final annihilation of the self, or eternal alienation from the presence of God. They seek to save the soul rather than the body—or at least center their main attention on soul-saving; some of them are even willing to sacrifice a considerable portion of bodily welfare to gain this more lasting and permanent spiritual welfare. Thus, in the religious description of salvation—especially at its upper reaches—are included the specifically other-worldly items of Satan's power and God's favor, hell and heaven; these are ultimates with which the other disciplines of salvation—science, politics, and the rest—do not attempt to deal. There is also greater importance attached to the attainment of goodness of character and spiritual graces; for not only are these an essential means for achieving the ultimate salvation of men from death, Satan, and hell, but they are also desirable in themselves as qualities to live with everlastingly.

### 3. *Salvation: Its Varieties*

But while religious salvation is distinguished from the nonreligious variety in these two ways, let us not forget that religions vary tremendously among themselves as to the nature of that salvation. The level of development attained by a given religion is of course involved here. Salvation *may* mean only continued physical existence for an indefinite period in a reasonably comfortable manner. Obviously we are here low in the scale of religious attainment—very near the primitive. But other differences have less to do with such factors. The religious view of the nature of man's eternal destiny, even among religions all well above the primitive level, will vary all the way from a lushly sensuous eternity in gardens of delight, to absorption into the impersonal Absolute, or to a conscious personal fellowship with a holy God. The particular brand of moral perfection toward which a religion urges man as the best means of gaining its proffered salvation, will, of course, be adapted to its particular scale of moral values—a scale perhaps significantly different from that of other faiths. One may laud warlike virtues, another nonresistance; one may call for animal sacrifice, another forbid the killing even of insect life. Religions are indeed one in their hope to achieve salvation, but many in the salvations they offer and the roads to it.



We may cut the cake of salvation in another way: *who* is to be saved? the individual or the group? one group or all men? The differences in answer here are fully as wide as those outlined above. In general one can say that as the individual assumes a more important place in culture and religion, so salvation comes to be thought of in more individualistic terms, while less developed groups think of salvation as primarily group salvation. This was definitely true of the Hebrews, to whom, for most of the Old Testament period, salvation meant the preservation of the people and nation. The Dahomey, whose preoccupation with the ancestors we have noted, thought not so much of the ancestor's continued existence in the spirit world as a glorious destiny to be arduously sought, but as a guarantee of the continued existence of the tribe on earth.

But with post-exilic Jews—as with Hindus, Buddhists, Moslems, and Christians—the scale has been reversed; it is the individual's salvation that is also sought. Early Buddhism cut quite ruthlessly across the ties of fellow-feeling and community obligation in its solitary search for salvation. Hinduism has always been characterized by the great number of those lonely pilgrims on the way to sanctity—*i.e.*, its holy men. And though Christianity has spoken frequently of community, it has often largely individualized the search for the soul's salvation. This individualism has partly resulted from the universalization of religion; for when the religious group becomes a special group in its own right, it says in effect: "This way of salvation we offer is for whosoever will" . . . and Whosoever is always an individual—not a class or group or race; he is of worth in and for himself. But further, it is also the result of the extension of the hope of immortality to the individual. At first it was the social group whose indefinite earthly continuance religion sought; then it was a favored few, like the kings of Egypt, who might achieve a life beyond this one; then the hope was extended to the masses.

Even so, the most individualistic concept of salvation has never ultimately avoided all reference to the religious group. Though early Buddhism set each man or woman resolutely to seek his own salvation, soon the faithful gathered themselves into an order; and still later arose the Mahayana form of Buddhism, which taught that one person's merit might be transferred to another's account; indeed, Buddha himself had put off his own final release to extend salvation to others. Even more particularly is this true of other faiths, where the sense of community has been pronounced, or where Supreme Reality is conceived in more personal terms, as God. In them ultimate salvation in the world to come has usually been thought of in terms of an eternal and glorified fellowship, with both God and the faithful. Roman Catholicism has made a considerable point of this, in fact, teaching that the faithful, both living and dead, are even now

in one communion of mutual helpfulness; hence those still living on earth pray to those who have gone on to the heavenly world (prayers to the saints) to help their lesser brethren in their continuing earthly struggle.

This bears directly on another question: *When* and *where* is this salvation to be realized? Obviously any group sharing the conceptions of the early Hebrews, who believed that such life as there was after death was an unsatisfactory shadow-existence which meant practically the end of all real life, would think of salvation in terms of this world, as consisting in safety from enemies, continued existence of the nation, and material prosperity. Many primitive or near-primitive religions are of this persuasion.

In radical contrast to this type are those religions that have thought of salvation almost entirely in other-worldly terms. Buddhism and Hinduism, for example, have predominantly taught that salvation means a total escape from the present form of human life—or even escape from that life itself, whether experienced in bodily or disembodied form. Yet even in this very negative context the world in which man now lives is not considered to be altogether outside the scope of salvation. Hinduism conceives its social system as a sort of ladder on which the soul may rise to salvation by successive rebirths in ever higher caste status. And Buddhism—which negates the present world even more than Hinduism—has developed an all-inclusive doctrine of infinite compassion or benevolence, extended even to the humblest living creature. This creation is not thereby saved, but it does participate in the compassionate overflow of salvation from the Buddha-world and from Buddha-like men.

In another interesting contrast we find later Judaism, Islam, and especially Christianity, divided within themselves in their witness to salvation. At some times and places they seem to say, along with Oriental faiths—though in different language—that salvation belongs to another world rather than to this one. The earth and life on it are pictured as temporary—the latter only a comparatively brief and unimportant preparation for future life in the world to come; man is conceived to be a stranger and pilgrim on the earth, a creature whose real home is not here but yonder. The Moslem looks forward with longing to everlasting joy in the gardens of Paradise; the Jew to the Messianic Age, which will stretch on into uncounted years in the future; the Christian to eternal life in the New Jerusalem. Indeed this present life with its sufferings is not worthy to be compared with what is yet to come.

Yet there is another side. For it is in these three faiths—particularly in Judaism and Christianity—that we find the growth of the greatest concern for the salvation of *this* world to be found anywhere in religion; and it is as genuine a part of these religions as their other-worldliness. It is perhaps a natural corollary of their conviction that God created the world, is directly concerned in



what takes place in it, and works out His will in its on-going events. Thus, even though it may be only a vestibule for the eternal world, it is an indispensable entrance and worthy of improvement. For a time the expectations of an immediate end of the age in which they lived turned both Christian and Jew aside from anything more than a merely passing concern with society and its problems. Christians expected Christ to return to earth to establish his kingdom of righteousness in the near future; and Jews, rejecting Jesus as the Christ, hoped for the coming of *their* Messiah, who should do the same for the chosen people. Both these hopes faded with the passing years, and the practical, active nature of these faiths reasserted itself. They took on the betterment of society as a religious burden—the Jew hoping for the coming of the Messianic Age of peace and brotherhood, the Christian for earth's becoming the Kingdom of God where His will would be done. In short, salvation for these two faiths came to include much of the world here and now, as well as the individual's hope for the world to come; their final goal is that of the transformed individual in a transformed society in a transformed heaven-on-earth. Even Islam, socially rather static, attempts to create a pattern of life governed strictly by the Koran, in the apparent conviction that preparation for paradise will be more successful in a community of orthodox habits than one of infidel customs.

One final question of classification—and a most important one—remains to be asked about religious plans of salvation: "*How* do you achieve your salvation? what is the route or technique by which you plan to arrive?" In some respects this is perhaps the most important of all the questions we might raise; for in this connection a faith must proclaim what is the practical and immediate thing men must do to be saved. Whatever the nature of the final goal of salvation, whatever theoretical interpretations are given it, here before us is the next step to be taken, here confronting us is the actual sort of life to be lived. And it will be mainly from this perspective that those who stand outside the religious sphere and compare faith with faith, will judge the respective ways of salvation proffered by the various religions. This does not mean that we have disposed of all the other more ultimate questions about the nature of salvation as being of no account—quite the contrary. We shall find the questions concerning positive or negative quality, individual or social concern, this-worldliness or other-worldliness in salvation, intruding themselves at every turn. Nor can the basic conceptions about the ultimate nature of reality held by each religion be by any means ruled out; the goal determines the way to it, as we have insisted; the kind of salvation sought determines the manner of seeking. Yet our avenue of approach will be: "*How* do you propose to get there?" since this is the most tangible and easily grasped way to deal with the whole complex matter. It is by the means prescribed for achieving salvation that we can best differentiate

one pattern from another, rather than by theoretical descriptions of final goals.

The ways of achieving salvation may be listed as three: (1) *the way of works*, or the achievement of salvation by the things one does; (2) *the way of devotion*, or gaining salvation by the quality of one's faith and love; (3) *the way of knowledge*, or the attainment of salvation by a direct mystical vision of Reality or God. Or very simply—though too simply—they might be called salvation by doing, feeling, or knowing.

These three great ways of achieving salvation are independent of any particular faith. One faith may seem to be most characteristically mystical, a second devotional, a third practical; but the classifications break down if we try to carry them out consistently on a faith-wide basis. Certainly some faiths have provided better examples of some one of these ways of achieving salvation than others. Yet to a considerable degree these major elements are to be found in all the great faiths. That is perhaps why they are great and why each appeals to a wide variety of men. Furthermore, we shall observe that these three ways are not mutually exclusive, but powerfully influence each other in the actual fabric of living religions. Mystical insight or direct knowledge of the divine diffuses its light through good works; love and faith spread their warmth through both knowledge and action; and a good moral life is commonly thought in all great religions to be the inevitable fruit of devotion and knowledge.



## SECTION II

# CLASSIC PATTERNS OF SALVATION

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### *Chapter XXI*

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#### THE WAY OF WORKS: LAW, SACRAMENT, MORALITY

##### *Introductory*

The achievement of religious salvation by works—that is, by doing specific tangible things to ensure it—is perhaps the oldest of all the ways to salvation that man knows. It has passed through a multitude of differing forms, but is essentially the same in all ages, and much alike in substance even when found in many different faiths. It represents a very direct and practical way to interpret religion; and hence it has appealed to direct and practical people of whom there is always an abundant supply. It is a way of saying: “If we must have such an institution as religion, if we must take into account powers greater than ourselves, then let us be direct, open, and businesslike about it. Let religion be open deed, open to every eye, rather than a secret rite known only to the few, or a matter of abstruse speculation or mystic vision possible for the still fewer.”

Those who follow this way will be religious activists; they will be organizers, church builders, administrators, and reformers. They will be serious-minded, earnest men who want to regulate human conduct in some systematic fashion. They will be interested in making rules for individual conduct and laws or codes for society. They will write creeds, create systems of doctrine, and organize the scattered motions of pious people into ritual patterns. They will be the creators of orthodoxies, lovers of tradition, systematizers of religious life and thought. They will tend to be literalistic and authoritarian—distrusting the random inspiration of the unfettered genius and the irregularities of the mystic.

Such persons are the religious realists who anchor the mystic's wild flights into

the spiritual ether to solid human and earthly realities. They voice the rather universal human demand that the emotion of the devotionalist shall produce more than tears and shouts of joy. It is, in fact, largely due to the efforts of these practical religious men that religion takes actual historical form in human society by way of institution and cultural pattern. Only as it follows the way of works can religion gear effectively into human social life. As a way of salvation it has its weaknesses and limitations, which we shall later evaluate; but it also has its great strengths, vitally useful to the life of faith.

So much for the general quality of the way of works and the nature of those who follow it as the way to salvation. Its specific formulations have been as varied as the particular religious contexts in which it is found. We choose here only three main types for illustration, with one or more examples of each. There is first salvation by *law*. In this context religion is conceived as a prescribed and regulated way of life that must be followed by each individual in the religious community if he is to gain salvation. This view finds concrete form in Hinduism's *Laws of Manu*, in Islam's theocratic social structure, and in Judaism's Mosaic Law. The second is salvation by *sacrament*, and will be illustrated from Roman Catholicism. This ecclesiastical form of the way of works promises men salvation through the supernatural efficacy of its rites. The third type of salvation by works is that of *morality*, and will find its example in Puritanism. According to this view it is the sober and godly life of good character and virtuous deed that brings salvation.

It should be emphasized that in none of these instances do we seek to say that this view of the way to achieve salvation is the only one recognized by a given faith; it is to some extent a matter of selecting only one context or area within the faith in question. Thus Hinduism is both mystical and devotional in some of its sects and in some connections, as well as being also legalistic. Both Judaism and Islam are far more complex as religions than mere narrow systems of dry rule-keeping. So also did Puritanism have its emotional warmth as well as its rigid morality; and Catholicism has its rich inner emotional and mystical life as well as its sacramental pattern. What we have here in our selected instances are certain clear manifestations of the way of works as these faiths have produced them. Though not completely descriptive of the faith in which they take form, they are nonetheless a characteristic product, and represent a basic element in that faith. So it is true to say that some faiths have *more* of the legalistic, sacramental, or moralistic element in them than others; that the sacramental structure of Catholicism, for example, is undoubtedly a main feature of that faith, and could not well be thought of in connection with the Quaker, Moslem, or Protestant. To a description of these examples we now turn.



### I. *Salvation by Law*

The distinctive characteristic of those religious views which prescribe that salvation is to be sought by obedience to law, is that the individual who follows such a pattern is inevitably involved actively in the group life of his society; for all legalisms are group as well as individual patterns. No doubt salvation may be sought by the individual for himself—at least he hopes to reap important personal benefits for himself from obedience to the group law. And it may be that he alone, within his own heart, can provide that full measure of devotion to the law which will make it an effective instrument of his personal salvation. Yet he is bound to it visibly and publicly, and will be cut off from the salvation his community of faith offers him unless he thus conforms. Indeed those communities that set great store by works highly value such individual conformity and rigidly enforce it. So it is that until very recently—and then only because it was forced to—Hinduism never brooked any abrogation of its religious caste law, and severely punished even minor infractions. And Islam and Judaism either are, or have been, fanatical in their emphasis on socio-religious solidarity within their groups.

#### a. *The Hindu Code of Manu: Salvation by Social Hierarchy*

Hinduism has its own specific brand of salvation by works, of which we have already seen one phase in the caste initiation ceremonies; and a rigorous pathway it is. For however flexible Hinduism may be in doctrine and some kinds of variant religious practice, it has been adamant in its social distinctions. Its religious tolerance in theoretical matters has only disguised its practical social intolerance—like vines covering a strong, high wall; but the wall of division between castes is still there, no matter how ivy-covered.

What we must not forget is that these caste walls are *religious* in nature, strongly reinforced by religious beliefs if not totally constructed by them; that the caste system has been an essential apparatus in the Hindu plan of salvation—though the future may prove it less essential than it has seemed in the past. A Hindu could not achieve salvation except as he conformed to the great basic caste pattern, and, like a worker bee in his well-defined compartment or occupational slot, worked out his appointed destiny. For the caste levels are the essential rungs of the great ladder of being, which stretches from the hells (purgatories) below, up to salvation from all sorrow and pain just beyond the top-most caste, in union with the Absolute. Human existence of any sort is a privilege, because it is achieved only after long centuries (as a rule) spent as disembodied spirit in the hells or in animal existences. When at last a living spirit is born as a human being, he may rejoice that only a few more reincarnations stand between him and his final release. But even here he must tread

carefully, for a misstep may plunge him again to the depths. His best—and only—chance is to perform faithfully the duties of his caste group, and hope in his next birth to rise in the scale of the castes until finally he achieves the top rung (Brahmin); there he may possibly achieve salvation. But it would seem on the whole that the fear of descending in the scale is stronger than the hope of rising or finally achieving salvation.

The basic document on which caste structure has been built—or by which it has at least been rationalized—is the *Laws of Manu*, written in the 2nd or 3rd century of the Christian era. It is a codification of Brahmin theory and custom of the most detailed and systematic sort—probably authored by some professional schools of philosopher-lawyers. Its form is the supposed utterances of Manu, the Hindu Adam, who is called upon (by the lawyers?) to explain the meaning of the ancient Vedic scriptures.

To the modern reader the basic motivation of the *Laws* seems to be the elevation of the professional teaching of the Vedas to the most sacred status conceivable, and thereby the elevation of the Veda-teaching caste to the top of the social and religious structure. Thus does Manu explain caste:

But in order to protect this universe He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate [duties and] occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet.

To Brahmins he assigned teaching and studying [the Veda] sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting [of alms].

The Kshatriya he commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study [the Veda], and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures.

The Vaisya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study [the Veda], to trade, to lend money, and to cultivate the land.

One occupation only the Lord prescribed to the Sudra, to serve meekly even these [other] three castes. (I, 87–91)<sup>1</sup>

In other places it is stated specifically that the Brahmins come from the mouth, the Kshatriya from the arms, the Vaisya from the thighs, and the Shudra from the feet of the Lord.

The main character of the caste system is thus clear. The first caste alone has the privilege of teaching the Vedas, and clearly stands within reach of salvation; and it alone is to be supported by the rest of the populace without performance of menial labor or even too heavy civic or administrative duties. To be sure, not all Brahmins are priests, nor all priests Brahmins; many come from the Kshatriya caste. But priest or not, the Brahmin is by caste a superior—even a holy

<sup>1</sup> The numbers used here and in later quotations refer to part and paragraph, respectively, as in the *Laws of Manu*, Volume XXV, *Sacred Books of the East*, Max Müller, ed., Oxford, 1886.



man. He is supposedly trained as a youth for the study and expounding of the Vedas, spending much time in reciting the sacred texts and in the performance of prescribed acts of ritual and prayer. Sometimes he may be forced by economic necessity into other occupations, but even here he is ringed round with prohibitions to prevent his religious defilement.

All three of the upper castes are called "twice born"—that is, "born of the Vedas" a second time on initiation into the ancestral caste. This initiation grants them the privilege of Vedic study as youths, which presumably fits them for adult responsibilities of whatever grade. The Shudra caste, comprised originally of the aborigines of the Indian peninsula who were conquered by the invading Aryans, is the servant class, which may not study the Vedas on pain of severe punishment or enter the temples for worship; indeed, nothing of all the apparatus of salvation is available to them. Only on funeral occasions may Shudras repeat the sacred texts. They are the "once born" whose best prospect is the obedient fulfillment of their caste obligations in the hope of a rebirth into a higher caste in their next incarnation.

Within each of these great compartments there are many subcompartments or occupational subcastes; carpenters, weavers, spinners, cobblers, tailors, for example, each have their own grouping, as well as subsubgroupings ad infinitum. And finally below all castes—even the Shudra—are the outcastes, some sixty million or more, who might be called the "never-born." Socially speaking they are almost below the human level, living outside the regular villages in their own communities, performing the most menial and filthy of all tasks; frequently they are the village sweeps and garbage collectors, the pariahs of Indian society. Here is the human waste bin of India, into which the rejected of all castes fall; and here they remain, world without end for successive generations, because neither an outcaste nor his child ever rises from the caste into which he descends or is born, to a higher one, save by death and a presumed birth into it in a subsequent life.

The castes are distinguished from each other by visible markings on the person or in his dress. Some castes—especially those religious groups which for all practical purposes have become castes—are distinguished by marks of different color, length, and direction, imprinted on the face. The three upper castes are also to be identified by the nature of clothing and accessories; Brahmins, for example, wear a triple-corded girdle of munga grass, the Kshatriya a bowstring girdle of murva fibre, and the Vaisya one of hemp. The sacred thread received on initiation is worn looped under one shoulder, and is of twisted cotton, hemp, and woolen thread for the three castes respectively. The staff of the Brahmin is the longest, and the others shorter in due order. The staple foods of each class are somewhat different, just as are the prescribed manners of addressing

superiors, equals, and inferiors. Caste lines apply also to marriage. One must marry his first wife from a caste of equal level; subsequent wives may be of lower caste, in descending scale—though this is frowned on when carried *too* far. Should a Brahmin marry a Shudra or an outcaste, he loses his own caste status.

The Brahmin in particular is to be shielded from religious contamination of any kind, in view of his character as guardian and interpreter of the holy Vedic knowledge; to this end he is subjected to an almost infinite variety of regulations of his personal habits. He is restricted in his divulging of the Vedas, for instance, to the upper castes; it is a grievous sin for him to teach them to Shudra or outcaste. And even among the upper castes he must further beware of reciting the Vedas on a variety of inauspicious occasions:

A Brahmin shall not recite [the Veda] during a dust-storm, nor while jackals howl, nor while the barking of dogs, the braying of donkeys, or the grunting of a camel [is heard], nor while [he is seated] in a company.

Let him not recite the Veda on horseback, nor on a tree, nor on an elephant, nor in a boat, nor on a donkey, nor on a camel, nor standing on barren ground, nor riding in a carriage. (IV, 115–120)

And so the prohibitions go on *ad infinitum*, until one wonders when and where the Brahmin *may* recite the Vedas.

It is the same with foods. "Garlic, leeks, onions, and mushrooms are unfit to be eaten by twice-born men," and so through a long list of plant and meat foods. Still further, the twice-born must carefully train himself in many other living habits, such as learning to sip his water in a certain manner out of a particular part of his hand, a different part being prescribed for each major caste. And the Brahmin is regulated even in the performance of his natural processes, like urination, which must be accomplished in a specified way.

The most stringent regulations and severest of penalties relate to intercaste relationships. In general it is forbidden for high-caste people to have anything to do with low-caste people. In particular any physical contact with them—even the most attenuated sort—is specially dangerous at the time of the monthly *Sraddha* or ceremonial meal. Besides a large number of very specific regulations surrounding the performance of the feast itself, the following suggestive items are added:

A Kandala [low or outcaste person], a village pig, a cock, a dog, a menstruating woman, and a eunuch must not look at the Brahmins when they eat. A boar makes [the rite] useless by inhaling the smell [of the offerings], a cock by the air of his wings, a dog by throwing his eye [on them], a low caste man by touching [them]. (III, 239–41)



The penalties for infractions of caste rules are severe—at least on paper—and very mixed in degree. The killing of a Brahmin and stealing of his wife or his gold merits death; but so does attributing high birth to oneself falsely, reviling the Vedas, or giving false evidence; killing a Shudra, a cat, ichneumon, blue jay, frog, dog, iguana, owl, or crow all rate the same penance. The careless destruction of life, even the cutting of fruit trees, shrubs, creepers, or flowering plants, calls for the repetition of one hundred Rikas or devotional passages. (XI)

As one might expect, the slaying of a cow or bull is relatively serious. Punishments like the following are prescribed: shaving off all one's hair, covering himself with the animal's hide, living in the cow house. Still further, he may be required to bathe in the urine of the cattle, inhale the dust raised by their feet, rest, sit, lie at the same time as they, and shelter them as far as possible from storm and heat. "The slayer of a cow who serves the cow [presumably another one] in this manner, removes after three months the guilt which he incurred by cow killing" (XI, 109-117). Thereafter he must offer the Brahmins ten cows and a bull, or in lieu thereof, all that he possesses.

And finally, to make the caste walls and the code provisions of the social law absolutely inviolate, social and religious pressures of other kinds are used. If one breaks caste law he may be fined, lose his inheritance or have it reduced, and/or be turned loose in society but "excluded from all fellowship at meals . . . all sacrifices . . . instruction or matrimonial alliance . . . all religious duties" (IX, 238-9); he may indeed be made into an outcast or be banished—especially for crimes against Brahmins.

The guilty are further threatened in these writings with future thousands of years spent in purgatories, or disagreeable reincarnations as animals or crippled human beings. The Brahmin who takes a bribe will be condemned to twenty-one specific purgatories; if he attempts to explain the Vedas to a Shudra, both will sink to the purgatory called *Asamvrita*; if he gives the leavings of a holy meal to a Shudra he will end up in the one called *Kalasutra* (III, 249, and IV, 81-90). He who slays a Brahmin will pass many lives in many purgatories, and slowly ascend the scale of rebirth through the forms of dog, pig, ass, camel, cow, goat, sheep, deer, bird, and finally a low-caste human being.

Many of the penalties were probably never carried out as prescribed. Penances of various kinds were gradually substituted for the severer penalties: payments of money, pilgrimages, fasts, and temporary self-denials of various sorts came to replace death penalties and banishment. And often too, even the substitutes fell into disuse. Nevertheless the caste structure has remained a potent force, and the loss of caste status the most fearsome of all penalties that can be visited on the social or religious rebel. If we ask why such a system of inherent oppression and inequality remained in force so long, three reasons could be given.

One is that it represented a form of social order in which everyone had his assigned place and carefully specified duties, however humble; he knew what was expected of him. Indeed, some strong resistance to the elimination of the caste structure, urged by India's present leaders, has come from the last place where one would expect it—the outcaste villages and communities; they fear to lose their particular niche and special privileges. And obviously the higher castes will scarcely voluntarily surrender the place and privileges that have been theirs from time immemorial.

But the basic reasons were deeper and other: they were religious. For one thing, the caste system could be rationalized as a result of past good and evil deeds. Why were some high-caste and others low? Why were some rich, handsome, healthy, and others poor, ugly, and diseased? Because of good deeds or sins committed in a former existence; thus was the problem of evil solved. A person's present social lot was the result of his past deeds, the work of his own hands; he alone was responsible—not a god, or society, or some fate. Hence to rebel against this inexorable law (Karma) that brings a man his just deserts, was both to be irrational and to hazard a plunge into the depths of fearsome hells or animal existences. The wise course was to submit to one's evil lot or low caste until his evil Karma was worn out.

And, finally, the caste system had its measure of promise; it was a way to salvation. One was fortunate to be born as a human being. And the presence of the Brahmin at the top—however revolting to democratic instincts—represented to the lower castes the hope of salvation. The Brahmin caste was the vestibule to salvation through which all must pass; how hopeful that some millions in each generation were born this near to salvation's release! Let every one revere and cherish them, then, as a visible symbol of his own best religious hope.

If the caste structure in modern India is fast weakening—as it is—it is primarily because of outward forces, not inward reform. There have been some few reform movements, but feeble and sporadic; rather has it been factors like the following: modern traveling conditions have made it nearly impossible for one caste to keep physically apart from another, for high caste Brahmins can scarcely purchase entire private railway coaches for their exclusive use; and when physical segregation begins to crumble, then its spiritual counterpart likewise begins to fade. Then there have been social and religious pressures from without; industrialization and political upheaval have changed the static social pattern, inexorably breaking up the ancient craft and caste alignments. And, finally, the Christian and Moslem intrusions into the Indian community, bringing with them their doctrines of social equality, have caused a considerable upheaval within Hindu society itself. The outcastes, below all recognized castes,



have been turning to these new religions, which gave them status as men and offered them a more immediate salvation than their own faith. Hindu religious leaders like the late Mahatma Gandhi—themselves imbibing inspiration from these more equalitarian religious sources—have sought to break down caste structure from within, and have denied its religious sanctity. How soon the caste structure will be broken in pieces, what will replace it as a social system, and what effect all this will have on the total pattern of Indian religion and its scheme of salvation, can only be surmised. It is certain that it will not yield without a valiant resistance, and when it does disappear it may take with it much of the ancient Hindu religion.

b. *Moslem Theocratic Law: Salvation in a Faithful Community*

In Islam we find a legalistic pattern of considerably different quality from that of Hinduism. There are, to be sure, some common features in both that are inherent in all systems of religious law. Each emphasizes a rather meticulous observance of the prescribed patterns of conduct; both have had the benefit of the legal mind in elaborating the manifold details of their codes; both are deeply tintured with their respective religious beliefs, since they are religious as well as social laws; each provides a patterned order of conduct whose observance is necessary to salvation, and an order of society in which such conduct can best be achieved. Yet there are important differences.

The Moslem is not quite as closely tied to the social structure for his salvation as the Hindu. The Hindu, as we have seen, looked upon the ascending caste levels as a stairway to final salvation—part and parcel of the divine plan. With the Moslem the connection is somewhat less direct, and its specific religious function not quite as obvious. Despite the strenuous manner in which the Moslem seeks to govern both individual and social life directly by the Koran, and to make state and church one, his social forms are somewhat incidental to his personal religious life. The Mohammedan community is a community of faithful believers who seek to govern personal relationships by their scriptures in such a way as to bring each one to paradise; and as much of government as is necessary to human life should, of course, conform to the same rules of scripture and aid the faithful to fulfill the practice of the true faith at every turn.

Hence, because the Moslem scheme of salvation is not as directly attached to social organization as the Hindu, the Moslem is not absolutely bound to realize any one best social pattern in his cultures. And so it has proved historically. The Arab Moslem conquerors of the 7th to 11th centuries were not crusaders for a new social order as such, in the lands they overran, nor the imposers of any one sacred political form; they sought booty, power, and converts to the faith. Rather as a matter of course they took with them the form of direct, auto-

cratic, personal rulership with which they were familiar. It was adopted rather uniformly in all Moslem countries, but with many local variations. Islam became an international religious culture, capable of considerable adaptability, rather than a hard and fast social order of one type, as was static Hinduism. And the individual Moslem—provided he kept the basic pattern of the faith—was allowed considerable freedom of social action in the expression of that faith.

The somewhat looser connection of religion with society in Moslem countries, and the greater flexibility of social form as compared to Hinduism, does not mean, however, that Islam is indifferent to the form of society in which it lives. The faith *may*, certainly, be practiced by a small minority or by a few individuals in alien cultures; indeed, Islam has been a first-rate missionary religion, pressing out aggressively into other cultures to make new converts on an individual basis. Yet it seeks to make the cultures it dominates solidly Moslem in every way—and has succeeded to a remarkable degree. For there is in Islam the unspoken but perfectly evident assumption that even with all the allowable variety of local practice, and the possibility of living the Moslem faith in a non-Moslem land, it can best be practiced in all its fullness in a society of orthodox believers. Thus for the Moslem no one form of government or pattern of society is heaven-sent, or necessary to his personal salvation; but he will seek to conform both government and society to the maxims laid down in the Koran—in so far as he can find relevant ones.

This, then, is the true Moslem approach to society: a simple—even fierce—directness of application of the sayings of Holy Writ to social and individual life, rather than the deliberate construction of a religious hierarchical society such as we find in Tibet or India. The Koran is held to be the last and greatest revelation of God. Some sects consider it uncreated, eternal in the heavens with God, a part of His being, finally given to our world of time and space through Mohammed in the fullness of God's time; as such it is an all-sufficient guide for all of man's life. What is *not* mentioned there is of supreme insignificance; what *is* spoken there is of maximum importance, calling for complete belief and absolute obedience.

Here indeed is the most protestant of all protestantism. No one could be more intensely sincere or literal than the orthodox Moslem in his attempt to apply the sayings of the Koran, as the law of the land, to the guidance of daily life. For him there is no real distinction between sacred and secular, between church and society or their respective laws, or between private and public morality—they are all one. It has been stated thus:

Juridical order and religion, law and morals are the two aspects of that same will [Allah's] from which the Muslim community derives its existence and direc-



tion; every legal question is in itself a case of conscience, and jurisprudence points to theology as its ultimate base.<sup>2</sup>

Such is the theory, and to a surprising extent, the practice of Moslem societies. The law of church and the land are theoretically one; theologian, lawyer, and ruler are overlapping occupations; one cannot successfully practice in any of these fields without having a good acquaintance with each of the others; especially do ruler and lawyer need to know their theology. Though this has led in practice to many difficulties, the Moslem has made a most strenuous effort to actualize the concept of a legal code that can be taken directly from religious scriptures. A student of Moslem law has described it thus:

The mass of material is overpowering; the strangeness of the ideas involved is perplexing. . . . [It] prescribes and describes the use of the toothpick and decides when a wedding invitation may be declined, enters into the minutest and most unsavory details of family life and lays down rules of religious retreat. . . .

The chapter on oaths follows immediately that on horse-racing. . . . Muslim law, in the most absolute sense, fits the old definition, and is the science of all things, human and divine. . . . It prescribes everything that a man shall *do* to God, to his neighbor, and to himself. Nothing escapes the narrow meshes of its net. One of the greatest legists of Islam never ate a watermelon because he could not find that the usage of the Prophet had laid down and sanctioned a canonical method of doing so.<sup>3</sup>

To be sure, the materials with which Islam has had to work were unpromising, when one thinks of them as the basis for a well-rounded and complete law code governing all phases of life, for the simple reason that not all phases of life are mentioned in the Koran. And that creates a difficulty, if one does not wish, after the eminent example of the above lawyer, to go without watermelons all his life. The range of precepts Mohammed left his followers in the Koran is in fact very uneven in quality, and spotty in its coverage of life situations. There are contradictory statements about the same things, with the later statement presumably the more authoritative—but there are often differences of opinion as to which is really the later. Much of the inspiration seems to have been somewhat hand-to-mouth, given to solve a particular difficulty, like a quarrel between two wives. And, as we have noted, the most incongruous items appear side by side—somewhat in dictionary fashion—so that the sublime and the ridiculous, the trivial and the important, the general and the detailed statement frequently rub shoulders. The following passage from Sura II of the Koran will serve for illustration:

<sup>2</sup> T. W. Arnold, ed., *The Legacy of Islam*, Oxford, 1931, p. 288.

<sup>3</sup> Duncan B. MacDonald, *Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence, and Constitutional Theory*, Scribners, 1903, pp. 66-7.

It shall be no crime in you if ye divorce your wives so long as ye have not consummated the marriage nor settled any dowry on them. And provide what is needful for them . . . with fairness; this is binding on those who do what is right.

But if ye divorce them before consummation, and have already settled a dowry on them, ye shall give half of what ye have settled, unless they make a release. . . .

Observe strictly the prayers, and the middle prayer, and stand up full of devotion towards God. . . . And such of you as shall die and leave wives, shall bequeath their wives a year's maintenance without causing them to quit their homes. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Clear and specific, but miscellaneous, we must say of such items. And when we have surveyed the whole of the Koran, this is the net result: very specific prescriptions on some particular items, with many others left out; and very few broad general principles for guidance.

As a result, the role of the lawyer, who seeks to make these varied and unsystematic materials into a comprehensive law, is most important, calling for considerable interpretation. His profession is called *fiqh*, or the "science of regulations." In the course of time, after a long period of disputes and even some intra-faith persecutions, the following great sources of religious law were recognized: the Koran as the supreme source; tradition as the next most important, including sayings of the Prophet as reported by his companions, and further reports about the ways in which he dressed, spoke, and acted; the agreement of the community, interpreted at first to mean the inhabitants of Mecca (the home of Mohammed), but later extended to mean contemporary theological experts; and finally, the use of analogy or the legal fiction, when, finding no actual rule bearing on the case, the judge or panel of experts draws a parallel from something else that Mohammed has said or done.

Obviously a whole body of commentary and case materials has grown up, specially designed to cover those areas where nothing specific has been ordained. So, despite the rigid, legalistic obedience the Moslem tries to give to the holy law, considerable freedom is allowed in many matters. There are at least four main schools, which—though perhaps grudgingly—recognize each other as orthodox. And there is room for the local custom to make its way into received tradition. A case in point is that of coffee-drinking, about which there was no provision in the Koran; early opinion was against it, but so popular was the practice that in the absence of a specific prohibition it was allowed.

But even in the Koran itself there is considerable liberty in many areas. (Moslems call their laws "laws of liberty.") The basic regulations are relatively simple, and do not demand too much of frail human nature. There are no great numbers of prohibitions. Celibacy, for instance, is not looked on as a saintly virtue, as it has been in Buddhism, Christendom, and Hinduism. Men are urged

<sup>4</sup> *The Koran*, Dutton, Everyman series, 1909, p. 364.



to consider their wives as "their fields" for hearty enjoyment. Continence is enjoined only on very special occasions, and then is something of a work of virtue beyond the call of duty. An orthodox Moslem may have only four wives at once, but in addition numberless concubines for sexual enjoyment; of course most do well, in the generally poverty-stricken Islamic lands, to afford one wife. And there are a few prohibitions which are rather generally observed among the faithful: certain periods of fasting from dawn to dusk (during the sacred month Ramadan); abstinence from alcohol, pork, and—for some zealots—tobacco as well. Beyond this, however, much is left to local custom or individual conscience.

The law recognizes in a positive way five classes of deeds: (1) Those *required* for every practicing Moslem. This includes most of the religious duties: prayer five times daily, with the proper purifications to precede it; the payment of alms; observance of the month of Ramadan by sunrise-to-sunset fasting; the making of a pilgrimage to Mecca once during one's life if at all possible; circumcision of all males. (2) Those deeds that are *recommended*, such as liberality in alms above the law, but whose omission is not punishable. (3) The *permitted* or neutral items, which allow for considerable local interpretation. (4) The *disliked*, or frowned-on, but not punishable deeds—viewed somewhat as divorce is in Christian circles. (5) The *forbidden* or punishable, including several of the items mentioned in the previous paragraph. Mohammedan communities vary considerably in their enforcement of these regulations, and in their classification of certain items. In the 19th century the Wahabite sect and their successors, the Brotherhood of As-Sanusi, sought to achieve a more vigorous enforcement of the ancient holy law, along with renewed missionary activity; today the As-Sanusi are dominant in several Moslem areas, particularly in Saudi Arabia. But on the whole, rigid enforcement of the holy law has somewhat lapsed in recent years.

The Moslem hope of a perfectly unified religious community and state, in which there would be a supreme spiritual and political ruler who would unify all the faithful in one great Moslem society, has, despite numerous attempts, seldom been realized. The first four caliphs after Mohammed did rule over a united people. But the empire long since broke apart on regional and national ambitions, helped along by conniving politicians. Nevertheless the caliphate—somewhat corresponding to the papacy in Roman Catholicism—continued in existence until the relatively recent past.

Actually the office and its occupants progressively degenerated. Finally established in Istanbul (Constantinople), its political power shrank to the bounds of Turkey. Its spiritual prestige, both there and in the rest of the Moslem world, was very slight; the Young Turks, in their reform of Turkish government in

1924, abolished it with no great difficulty, and eliminated the constitutional clause defining Islam as the national religion. Thus occurred the first decisive breach of church and state in Islam. Though other Moslem countries have not yet followed suit, the Moslem way of life in most of them is under considerable strain. Internal and external political and economic pressures are bearing down heavily on the generally unprogressive Moslem nations, and Moslems are comparing their backward status unfavorably with the scientific and social progress in non-Islamic countries. The inelastic Koranic pattern of governing a people is not easy to adapt to a restless and changing society. Moslem women, for example, are chafing at their subordinate status in Moslem societies; and political nationalists in other countries besides Turkey are becoming impatient with the inept religio-political structure of their nations. Western scientific secularism is making serious inroads on the religious faith of an increasing number of Western-educated young men. Our time may indeed see a radical transformation in many of these last among human societies to be ruled directly by a Holy Scripture—though no one can predict what its form will be. Even in secularist Turkey many are swinging back to a more definitely religious viewpoint, though with “neo-orthodox” modifications. The main question is whether Islam can find sufficient resources within its tradition—so far inelastic in spirit if not in practice—both to accommodate it to modern conditions and also to preserve its historic religious integrity.

### c. *The Jewish Law: Salvation through Holy Peoplehood*

The best way to understand the Law of Judaism is to begin where the Jewish community does in its thinking about the matter: the Law is a compact or covenant between God and His people. The basic idea here is that of a divine choice of the Hebrews for a unique mission: they were deliberately and consciously chosen by Jehovah from among all other peoples as instruments of His purposes on earth; and the covenant He made with them on Mount Sinai, after He had delivered them from Egyptian oppression, is the implementation of that choice. It is a mutual agreement made by Moses, the people's representative, and God, in which God binds Himself to guide His people in the fulfillment of their destiny, and the people bind themselves to serve Him and Him only according to the provisions of His holy law, or the Torah, *i.e.*, the first five books of the Bible.

Once we have grasped this basic idea of the Law as a contractual agreement between Jehovah and His chosen people, everything else will fall into its proper place. It will prepare us, for instance, for the spirit of meticulous observance that has been accorded to the Law by the Hebrew-Jewish community during most of its history and by most of its members. For the Orthodox Jew the Law,



contained in the first five books of the Bible, was dictated directly to Moses by Jehovah. It is to be obeyed in all its explicit details, under pain of God's great displeasure and the possible loss of status as His chosen people; all of it, down to the last jot and tittle, is God's will.

The actual legal content of the Law books as found in the Old Testament is very short—something around a hundred pages—mainly in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, and repeated in condensed form in Deuteronomy. It was a simple law for a simple society—only a fragment of what any modern state or nation uses for its guidance today. But it was nonetheless intended to be determinative of the total Hebrew life in a way that not even modern law approaches: for it sought to mold Hebrew life both from within, by infusing its provisions with moral and religious values, and from without, by prescribing definite duties and regulations. It prescribed in detailed manner for the public and private worship of Jehovah, including the finer points of altar decoration, the manner of sacrificial offering, and the preparation of the worshiper for worship. It legislated extensively on civil and social matters, including civil administration, economic policy, personal relationships, and property control. It has also woven into its structure some rather far-reaching ethical principles. And it tried to unify the whole pattern of civil, social, and moral regulations by making each provision in it a direct commandment of God, disobedience to which would be visited with both human and divine punishment.

Obviously such a comprehensive pattern in such small compass could not endure without considerable addition and interpretation—no matter how compact and unified the life pattern to which it might be applied; therefore an immense body of interpretation and case study has grown up about it through the centuries, and now comprises a good part of the immense commentary called the *Talmud*. Although the Talmud has not the divine authority of the Torah, it has gone far toward concretely and specifically defining the Jewish way of life; and to that way, basically set forth in the Torah and interpreted by Talmudic commentary, the Jew has been unswervingly loyal. He sees it as God's will for him; it is not his to question why, or to draw back from the hardness of its provisions; because it was proclaimed once and for all on Mount Sinai, and its keeping is the unalterable condition of divine favor. Therefore he has stubbornly maintained his essential way of life, including everything from peculiar dress and food habits to the central theological doctrines. All this is God's structure; to be a Jew one must observe both the external law of physical and social relations, and the inner law of the heart.

Despite the bulk of commentary, the main external features of the Jewish pattern of life according to law are rather easily defined. They root in the conception of a chosen people called to be separate from others; and that

separateness is physically expressed as follows: observance of every seventh day as a sabbath for worship of the one true God in temple, synagogue, and home, and for complete rest from labor; circumcision of every male child within a few days of its birth, and of every male convert on his admission to the faith; the prohibition of intermarriage with non-Jews; and the observance of the distinction between "cleanness" and "uncleanness" with regard to the choice and preparation of all foods.

This food distinction is of prime importance to the Jew; it is this more than anything else that has set him apart from his fellows, both in his eyes and theirs. To be clean or *kosher* means to be pure and good, fitted for the use of God's people; the unclean is the prohibited. This distinction as made in the Bible is rather far-reaching. Here are some examples: it is unclean for man or woman to wear the clothing of the other sex; garments should not be woven of mixed fibers; the touching of a dead body, human or animal, renders a person unclean; a leper is unclean and must proclaim the fact wherever he goes among people, for one who touches him is also unclean. Though hygienic considerations are involved here, the essential meaning of uncleanness is *ritualistic*: one who is unclean cannot properly worship God, or even go on living in the holy Jewish community in fellowship with its members, until he is ceremonially purified. In New Testament times this ritual purification for worship, and before eating ordinary meals, had become rather elaborate for some of the stricter observers of the Law; it required a diligent scrubbing of the hands well up the wrists, and a most careful avoidance of running any of the defiled water back onto the cleansed portion of the hand.

But the center of the distinction was and is the matter of foods. No unclean animal or food was to be sacrificed in the temple. (When Antiochus Epiphanes in the 2nd century B.C. desired to profane the temple, he sacrificed swine's flesh on the altar.) Nor must any good Jew partake of unclean foods. Straight down through the middle a line was drawn, dividing the two kinds from each other. Thus it is stated in Leviticus 11:

And the Lord spake unto Moses . . . saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth.

Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.

Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you.

And the coney, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. . . .



And the swine, though he divide the hoof, . . . yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you.

Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you.

The chapter goes on to make other distinctions: forbidden as unclean are birds of prey, fish without fins or scales, and creeping creatures (worms, mites, oysters, lobsters). Nor is this the end. Milk and meat must not be cooked together. And even the clean meats must be prepared properly—that is, by the draining out all possible blood before eating or sacrificing. Meats that are otherwise clean may become unclean by faulty slaughtering practices. (The usual way of killing kosher meats is to open a vein or artery in the animal's neck and let it bleed to death; thus the maximum amount of blood flows out before coagulation. Still further, some meats are soaked in salt water—even after slaughter by kosher methods.) In general all plant products are kosher.

Obviously such distinctions are difficult to maintain where Jews have moved out into non-Jewish societies; they have required considerable reinterpretation for the present day. Where there is doubt, a rabbi with special training may be consulted, and food-processing companies with a large Jewish clientele sometimes maintain such a specialist for the specific purpose of officially certifying foods to be kosher. Here is an example of the difficulty the modern Jew faces in America:

Another case in point is gelatin, which is derived from the bones of all kinds of animals. Some Rabbinical authorities . . . say that gelatin is not Kosher because non-Kosher animals are used. However, there is another school of thought which says that gelatin is not *Traif* [non-Kosher] because in its manufacture, the bones are so treated chemically that the organic matter . . . is lost. Glycerine falls in the same category. The animals being non-Kosher, the strict constructionist school claims that . . . [it] is *Traif*. The more liberal school says that glycerine, as such, did not exist in the animal, but that it is made, by chemical processes, from the fat.<sup>5</sup>

The result of the attempt to maintain the Jewish way of life in all its particularity has been, of course, rigidly to separate Jewish from non-Jewish communities throughout the world. The Jewish pattern of life makes the Jew peculiar to his neighbors; he cannot eat their foods or fully take part in their social life. Nor can this pattern be practiced very successfully by the solitary individual; hence Jews tend to congregate in close-knit local community groups even in the large cities, where there will be sufficient demand to maintain a kosher butcher and available supplies of kosher foods.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Jacobs, consultant for the Jewish market, *The Jewish Dietary Laws*, Joseph Jacobs Organization, New York, pp. 10 f.

It should be added that this separatism brought about by the rigid practice of the Law was aided and abetted—even enforced—by outside sources. First the Romans and then European Christians segregated Jews into their own separate communities; they were forbidden all public office, most of the professions or trades, and crowded into separate living areas—the ghettos.

Thus the internal and external forces of segregation working together produced an introverted community life of great inward intensity, which turned again and again to the practice of the Law as both a distinguishing way of life, proudly maintained despite all destructive pressures, and a protective device for the community. The outward marks of Judaism were to the Jew not shameful brand marks, but the seal of God's choice; His way was a hard and austere discipline which only the specially called could fulfill. And this same observance became a protective religious and cultural shield against an aggressively missionary Christendom. It was a hard shell of custom into which to retire in stormy weather or to escape Christian evangelists, and from which to venture forth again when possible. It kept the Jewish consciousness of a unique status before God from weakening, by means of its daily reminders of the covenant; it kept the Jewish community from absorption by surrounding communities, by making high and tight the encircling wall of physical and cultural separation.

This is not the whole story of Judaism, however; for its historical experiences have modified the character of its legalism and affected its inner development, making it quite different from the other legalisms we are studying. The very place where the Hebrews first settled foreshadowed their destiny; for ancient Palestine was a narrow land bridge between the two great centers of power in the ancient world, Egypt and Assyria, and the Hebrews were caught in the cross-tides of their struggle for world conquest. Only a small people at best, they were able to maintain a rather precarious existence for about six hundred years, before they were finally conquered and their upper classes carried away into captivity. The remnant who returned carried on for another five hundred years or so as a small province subject to successive great powers (Persia, Greece, Rome), but were finally scattered to the ends of the earth with the destruction of the temple by the Romans in A.D. 70 and the crushing of a final rebellion sixty-odd years later.

Such bouncing from pillar to post, and subsequent centuries of living in the storm cellars of alien cultures, affected Judaism both externally and internally. It seasoned the group into a small, compact, and tough minority fitted to survive. There was no time or room within Judaism to build up aristocratic caste distinctions as in Hinduism—a religion of hundreds of millions of people living rather secludedly within their subcontinent; moreover, the Hebrew instinct



was always set against religious class distinctions. In Israel God had spoken to the humblest men, like Nathan the prophet, and Amos the herdsman of Tekoa, and bade them rebuke kings for their sins. Judaism was also kept from developing into a universalistic religion like Islam, whose gospel was for all men; Judaism's faith remained peculiarly bound to its racial heritage and group existence.

These experiences also streamlined the structure of the faith. As a perpetual minority living predominantly a hunted life, Judaism must put its religious paraphernalia into easily portable shape, ready, so to speak, for almost instant erection or collapse; it must be able to set up its essential religious housekeeping with minimum materials and under adverse conditions. It was rather stringently aided in this streamlining by history itself. Swept from their native soil, the exiles of 586 B.C. had to find a pattern of religious worship apart from the temple at Jerusalem, which had been left in ruins. Though the returning exiles some fifty years later immediately set up the sacrificial ritual of temple worship, a still longer and more absolute separation was in store for them; five hundred years or more later the Romans destroyed the temple completely—except for a few shattered remains of the wall—and scattered the Jews throughout the Mediterranean world; their only remaining contact with Palestine's temple was the bitter privilege of visiting the ruin and weeping beside its broken fragments. Today, even though Israel is once more established in Palestine as a nation, Moslem Arabs control the ancient temple site, which is crowned by a mosque.

The result has been that much of the Law—all that has to do with temple furnishings and ritual—has become a dead letter. (Perhaps the prophets, who were so critical of it all, would rejoice if they knew of it.) Pious Jews may read through such materials in order to glean symbolic meanings, or perhaps weep for the lost glories of the temple, but the living community has sloughed it off as excess baggage; it has been replaced by the simpler home and synagogue services. Institutional structure throughout Judaism has been kept at a minimum, its basic commandments and essential observances few. Present-day Judaism gives far greater attention to the prophetic teachings about individual and social morality than ancient Judaism did. No doubt this change of spiritual emphasis is permanent; it is indeed doubtful whether modern Jews would know what to do were they given a brand new temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem tomorrow morning, with full rights to use it as they would. Would it be a religious museum, or a venerated but unused shrine?

Even the compact, time-tested communal pattern which persecuted Judaism has evolved through the centuries is today under severe strain; it has been savagely attacked in various parts of the world by crushing waves of anti-Semitism. Its whole concept of separatism has been regarded with hostility by

many other cultural groups, social, economic, political, and religious; and some of them have sought to destroy organized Judaism. As a result there is division within the Jewish community as to how it should meet these challenges to its way of life and its group consciousness; and a few highly individualistic Jews have severed themselves from the community as far as possible by change of name and rejection of religious allegiance to the faith of their fathers, believing that group separatism of any sort is a dangerous luxury that only invites persecution.

The Jewish people as a whole, however, have not accepted such a radical solution; yet among themselves they are divided into three groups with regard to the best way for the community to maintain its identity and bear its religious witness. *Orthodox* Judaism holds to the absolute literal observance, as far as is humanly possible, of the Jewish pattern of life in all its details. Only minimum and absolutely essential variations should be made in ritual or personal conduct patterns. This is the pattern that has held Judaism together through the centuries, and the only possible way, the Orthodox believe, to avoid complete Jewish assimilation into other groups. *Conservative* Judaism seeks to mediate between this and the liberal (Reform) interpretation, by retaining undisturbed much of the ancient ritual pattern, but making some seemingly necessary concessions in the area of personal living habits, recognizing that the Jew must live in a world largely made up of non-Jews.

*Reform* Judaism, strongest in the United States, hopes to streamline the structure of Judaism still further than political and social pressures have done. It would slough off the dietary habits as currently impractical and nonessential; it would say that these may once have served their purpose as indicating holiness unto the Lord by physical symbolism, but that today the Jewish community must be distinguished by the purity and devotion of its moral and spiritual life—not by outward eccentricities. The Jew must be foremost in his devotion to the worship of one God and to the hope of the brotherhood of all men under Him; loyalty to the living Jewish community should be substituted for the niceties of ancient legal observance.

Which of these ways will prevail in Judaism is perhaps not for the outsider to predict. Decimated European—and largely Orthodox—Judaism can no longer speak with such a weight of authority or influence as predominantly Conservative and Reform American Judaism; and yet the weight of events is such as to curb the extremest manifestations of Reformism. The continuing persecution of Jews as a racial group in the modern world, and the opening of the ancient Palestinian home to Jewish refugees and idealists, have turned the bulk of Jews away from attempted assimilation with the societies in which they are a minor-



ity, to a renewed emphasis on their Jewish separateness, and to the vigorous espousal of the Zionist cause and its support of the State of Israel.

And what salvation, we may finally ask, does the Jew hope to achieve by all this strenuous and costly devotion to his community and its way of life? The answer for the Biblical Hebrew would have been simple: God's material favor for the nation. Under Moses he hoped to come into the "Promised Land," *i.e.*, Palestine; under his kings he hoped for the salvation of his nation from destruction by its foes to an indefinitely prolonged historical existence: this would be his reward for keeping the Law of his God. The prophets and apocalyptists taught him to hope for a coming Kingdom and a coming King, who would sit on his father David's throne, and whose reign would usher in world power and prosperity for his people. He would be an "anointed one"—the Messiah described by Isaiah and Micah.

What is modern Judaism's hope of salvation? That would be harder to state. The Messianic dream has faded—though many arose to call themselves Messiah, even as late as the 18th century, and always secured numerous followers. Some few may consider the modern return to Palestine as the fulfillment of the old prophecies, and await there the coming of Messiah; but they are no doubt very few. Nor has the hope of personal immortality, which arose in Judaism a century or so before the time of Jesus, ever assumed the importance among Jews that it has in Christianity. Perhaps Judaism's main goal is the hope of a social salvation of some sort—a world-wide Messianic *age* without a personal Messiah, but characterized by its Messianic qualities of peace, brotherhood, justice, freedom from want and fear, and the worship of one true God. Then the Jewish community will have fulfilled its destiny, all the world will be God's kingdom, and all men share equally in His purposes.

## 2. *Salvation by Sacrament: Roman Catholicism*

We have dealt at length with the legalistic forms of religious practice, in which men and societies seek salvation through the observance of codes of personal and group conduct. The importance given this particular form of salvation by works is due to its widespread character. For two great world religions are predominantly—though not completely—legalisms, namely Islam and Judaism; and another, Hinduism, is thoroughly legalistic in one great area of its life. But there are other formulations of the way of works, and we now turn to one of these others whose practice is also important and widespread, namely, *sacramentalism*.

The word itself must first be defined. The dictionary states it thus: a sacrament is "one of certain religious acts, ceremonies, or practices distinguished from all others in Christian rites as having been observed or recognized by

Christ and given a certain character by him.”<sup>6</sup> This definition confines it to the Christian tradition, and it is from that tradition that we are taking our example. Yet, while the term is of almost exclusively Christian use, the general sense of it is much wider. We may call any religious rite or ceremonial a sacrament if it has a peculiarly sacred or supremely important status in a given religion, especially if its performance is held to accomplish some essential religious good. And a sacramental religion is one that strongly emphasizes that such specific rites are of paramount importance to the practice of that faith and for achieving the salvation it offers.

In this general sense any highly ritualistic religion will probably have elements of sacramentalism. We might call primitive religions sacramental in this sense, because all primitive life is impressively ceremonialized, and its ceremonial is held to be necessary for influencing favorably the more-than-human powers. This is so closely related to magic, however, that it is probably not correct to call it fully sacramental in the religious sense. But it must be observed in passing that even fully developed religious sacramentalism has a curious likeness to magic, in that the performance of the given ritual act, if it is properly done, is held to be efficacious in itself and by its very doing. Indeed, one of the favorite charges of the nonsacramentalist against sacramentalism is that it is magical superstition.

Ancient Confucian and modern Shinto public ceremonial are to a considerable extent sacramental—though it is hard to draw the line between sheer love of ceremonial for its own sake and the actual effect it is supposed to have; in these two instances the former element probably bulks very large. Hinduism is in part sacramental, especially in such ceremonial as surrounds the initiation of the twice-born into his caste, and was even more highly sacramental in the ancient elaborate sacrificial rituals of Brahmanism at about the time of the birth of Buddha in the 6th century B.C. This quality is passing away in considerable part, however, in modern Hinduism; shorter, less expensive, and easier ways of salvation are more popular. Undoubtedly Tibetan Buddhism is fully sacramental; for its many elaborate rites are believed to be necessary and efficacious in foiling the demons who threaten the people at every turn, and the whole land is filled with priests to perform these rites.

For our particular illustration of sacramentalism, however, we shall turn to the Christian context. Here the word had its origin; and here we have what is perhaps the most fully explicit theory and most carefully organized practice of sacraments. Christendom roughly divides in two along these lines. Protestantism is on the whole nonsacramental, observing rather simple rituals and scarcely

<sup>6</sup> *Webster's New International Dictionary*, second ed., 1945.



considering them effective in themselves for salvation. There is considerable variation here, of course, from the Quaker, who avoids all possible ritual, and hence is antisacramental, to the Anglican, who is ritualistic and prosacramental. Catholicism, of course, is fully sacramentalist in its approach to salvation—whether Orthodox, Coptic, or Roman; and it is to a description of this sacramentalism that we shall now turn.

But before we consider Catholic sacraments in detail, it should be observed that there is a great likeness between the systems of religious law we have been observing and the system of sacraments we are about to describe. Both are ways of works; something is *done* to achieve salvation—something very specific and tangible—and in each case it must be done in a rather rigidly prescribed way. The church lawyer (legist) in Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam puts forth his greatest effort in defining precisely what it means to fulfill the law in all possible circumstances; likewise the professional sacramentalist (priest) is most carefully trained in the correct manner of performing the rituals of his faith. Priest and religious lawmakers are brothers under the skin, to whom regularity and order are of the essence.

The difference between legalism and sacramentalism is in their scope and main interest. A legal pattern of life tends to include its totality. We have seen, for instance, how the *Laws of Manu* surround the Brahmin with minute regulations for every waking hour, and are the basis for the all-inclusive caste system of India; how the Moslem seeks to find a Koranic text to apply directly to all possible parts of his personal and community life (and some impossible ones); and the way in which the Jewish Law became a comprehensive pattern for community life down to and including the minutiae of eating and dressing. The main purpose of the legal structure is to provide an inclusive context for religious living. *Legalism is sacramentalism spread very thinly over the whole of life.* Somewhat contrastingly, sacramentalism is only a part of this total structure; its consuming interest is in a particular part of the ritual observances—usually those narrowly centering in worship itself. Sacramentalism is ritualism to the *n*th degree, in its most intensive form. A sacramental religion is one which says in effect: "The regulation of the totality of life and culture is important, but the heart of the matter is contained here in our ritual. It is the proper use of ritual that brings salvation. The performance of this ritual is necessary to salvation, whatever else may be important." *Sacramentalism is legalism concentrated in worship.*

In this sense Islam and Judaism are legalist rather than sacramentalist. They have their rituals, to be sure, and those rituals are important—an integral part of the legal pattern of salvation; the good Jew and Moslem is expected to participate in them. Yet their main emphasis is actually not on worship ritual

but upon observance of the total pattern of life prescribed by the law. The worship ritual pattern is kept relatively simple; and in neither of these faiths is there, rightly speaking, such a priesthood as is necessary for a sacramental system. The rabbi is a teacher and the mullah preaches, but neither is a doer of mysterious sacramental deeds. Islam is thus nonsacramental by deliberate choice; Judaism was kept from becoming so by the destruction of its temple and the subsequent elevation to leadership of the scholar rather than the priest.

Now in the same sense Catholicism has the body of a legalism but at heart is sacramentalist. It has an ordered, hierarchical system of government leading upward from the humble believer to the supreme pontiff in Rome. It has a vast body of canon (church) law, which is the work of some of its most brilliant minds over the centuries. It has a full legal apparatus for weighing the evidence before pronouncing on the genuineness of a miracle or the right of one of its faithful to be called a saint. It has a very carefully balanced system of religious bookkeeping by which merit (credit with God toward heaven) may be transferred by church authority from one person's account to another's. All this is legalism, pure and simple.

Yet the heart of its effectiveness is in the sacramental structure; the legal apparatus exists only to make the sacramental system effective in its operation. This is obvious in the way in which the legal system of the church operates in disciplining its erring members; for discipline is imposed almost entirely by sacramental means—particularly in countries where Catholicism does not have the power of civil authority. And even where there is such support it is still an essential part of church discipline. To those who have confessed a sin and wish to atone for it, the sacrament of penance is applied: self-denial in some form, a larger quota of daily prayers, more frequent church attendance, money contribution, or pilgrimage. For those who rebel against the Church there are sacramental restrictions, such as denial of baptism to the children of erring parents, refusal to perform a disapproved marriage with church sanction, denial of the Eucharist or of extreme unction to those who persist in their obstinacy. In medieval times a whole region might be cut off from all priestly services by the imposition of an interdict, until its ruler repented of his opposition to the Church. And the ultimate disciplinary measure—excommunication, or being cast out of the Church—is primarily fearful to the Catholic because it severs him utterly and finally from participation in the sacraments, and thus from the possibility of salvation itself.

Obviously sacramentalism magnifies the priestly role in religion. The sacrament, to be valid, must be proper to the occasion, proper in the manner of its performance (*i.e.*, according to the traditional form), and proper in its authorization; but for the Catholic the last of these proprieties is by far the most vital.



It may be necessary, for example, to modify the form of the ritual to suit the occasion. In the desert, baptism by the pouring of sand rather than water has been used; or if a priest is unavailable a Catholic layman may baptize an unbaptized baby that is near death. Under battlefield conditions there is considerable relaxation of regular rules: permission is granted for the soldier to eat meat on Fridays, rituals may be drastically shortened for emergency situations, and even a Protestant chaplain may hold a cross before the eyes of the dying Catholic, if no priest of his own faith is at hand, and if that cross has been previously blessed by a Catholic priest. But these are emergency conditions, and even these variations must have been sanctioned beforehand by high church authorities. The Catholic doctrine that there is no salvation outside the regular ministrations of the Church still stands unimpaired, even in such special circumstances. In general, Catholic ritual is effective only when conducted by a priest in good and regular standing and in the prescribed manner.

Under such a careful guarding of sacramental privileges we should expect the Catholic sacramental structure to be systematically conceived and organized—and so it is. It recognizes seven sacraments, whereas the most of the rest of Christendom (Orthodoxy excluded) recognizes as a rule only two: namely, Baptism, and the Eucharist.<sup>7</sup> The seven Catholic sacraments are these: (1) *baptism*, both for infants and for adult converts, by sprinkling; (2) *confirmation*, or joining the Church; (3) *Holy Eucharist*, or the receiving of the blessed Host as the body of Christ in the sacrifice of the Mass; (4) *penance*, the rendering of satisfaction for sins committed; (5) *extreme unction*, the prayerful anointing of one in danger of death; (6) *orders*, or the induction of a candidate into the priesthood; and (7) *matrimony*, performed by a priest of the Church.

These sacraments as administered by the Church are held to have been instituted by Christ himself, and to be necessary for man's salvation; and in themselves they are efficacious in the achievement of that salvation. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* thus defines their function:

By baptism we are born again; confirmation makes us strong, perfect Christians and soldiers. The Eucharist furnishes our daily spiritual food. Penance heals the soul wounded by sin. Extreme Unction removes the last remnant of human frailty and prepares the soul for eternal life, orders supplies ministers to the Church of God. Matrimony gives the graces necessary for those who are to rear children.<sup>8</sup>

These seven sacraments form the basic structure for the ritual functioning

<sup>7</sup> The Eucharist is also called the Lord's Supper and Holy Communion.

<sup>8</sup> "Sacraments," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Encyclopedia Press, Inc., New York, 1913, Vol. XIII, p. 301.

of the Catholic Church as a way of salvation. They are held to be "efficient instrumental causes" for the working of God's saving grace.<sup>9</sup> The Catholic Church denies vigorously that they are mere symbols that excite saving faith in the believer, or that they depend wholly on the receiver's sincerity—as Protestants have tended to say. Even the morally unworthy priest, if he has not been unfrocked or removed from office, cannot impede the effectiveness of the rite he administers. The priest as an officer of the Church is like a bank cashier who draws a bank draft on the treasury of the Church, in which the abundant merits of Christ and his saints are stored; the bank draft is good even though the cashier may not be.

For an understanding of the detailed working of the sacramental system we turn to the sacrament of penance. To quote the official definition in the *Encyclopedia*: "Penance is a sacrament . . . in which forgiveness of sins committed after baptism is granted through the priest's absolution to those who with true sorrow confess their sins and promise to satisfy for the same."<sup>10</sup> There are three steps in the process: First, secret or private *confession* of sins to a priest. Such confession must be made regularly by layman, priest, and even the Pope himself, to remain in good Catholic standing. This confession is inviolate even in civil law courts. Second, *absolution* given by the priest, when he is convinced that repentance is genuine, in the name of God and by the authority of the Church vested in him. This absolution frees the penitent of all guilt of an eternal nature, that is, such guilt as calls for God's further displeasure or punishment of the sinner in hell. Third, *satisfaction*—where penance proper really begins.

The theory of penance holds that even when the penitent has been absolved by the word of the priest, and thus forgiven in the eyes of God, God's *justice* has not been satisfied. Here is legalistic phraseology; for as the criminal may repent of his crime against society and still be punished by imprisonment or death, so the sinner with God. Some "temporal satisfaction" must be made for the forgiven sin, some suffering or sacrifice, some mortification of body or spirit in addition to God's "free" forgiveness. If this satisfaction is not voluntarily made on earth, it must be made in purgatory before entrance to heaven is granted.

The priest acts in this connection as a spiritual specialist; having heard confession of sin, he prescribes a remedy suitable to the sin and sinner for the making of this satisfaction. Its more usual forms are charitable deeds, gifts, fasting, and prayers. Most of this is privately imposed and secretly carried out, though in medieval times a public penance was sometimes prescribed—especially

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.

<sup>10</sup> "Penance," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XI, p. 618.



for a flagrant sinner. He might be required to make public confession of his misdeeds, wear mourning for a certain period, make a pilgrimage, and be excluded from the sacraments at his own salvation's peril for a time.

The priest uses his discretionary powers as a practicing spiritual physician; but he has some guidance in the matter, and may in some cases be overruled by his superiors. The medieval church drew up a very detailed list of sins and fitting penances, much in the same style that civil law prescribes specific penalties for specific crimes. There was somewhat more flexibility than in most civil codes, however, in that certain different kinds of penance were held to be equivalent to each other. The repetition of fifty psalms—length not mentioned—was considered to be equal to several days of penance or of fasting; a bread-and-water fast equaled two or three ordinary fasts of less severity; a specified money payment, toward the erection of a church or for the poor, might provide satisfaction for a specific deed.

It was in connection with penances that there grew up the practice of *indulgences*, which so roused Luther's ire. An indulgence is an official relaxation of a penance imposed by a priest on a penitent, or a reduction of the terms of that penance in virtue of a "consideration." The Pope alone can give a full or *plenary* indulgence, in which all temporal punishment (*i.e.*, disciplinary punishment on earth or in purgatory for a limited period) is remitted and the recipient is straightway ready for admittance to heaven; he, as the supreme treasurer of the accumulated merits of Christ and the saints, can do this by allowing a sufficient application of those merits to cancel out the sinner's negative spiritual balance. The Crusaders were granted such an indulgence when they set out on their holy wars against the Moslem infidel. Lesser priests can remit indulgences to a partial degree—in terms, say, of so many days' reduction of penance. And this may apply to the dead in purgatory, as well; by prayers or gifts their stay may be shortened.

The abuses that might grow up about such an institution—and did, especially in the medieval Church—aroused the anger of the Reformers. The Church had become lax in its administration of the indulgence system. Designed for operation within a parish, where the discretionary power of lessening or changing a penance might be exercised by a local priest in a case with which he was personally familiar, it became a "pay to bearer" demand note. St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome was in the building, and new revenues were desperately needed. Therefore papal authority was granted to "sell," for specified sums of money, indulgences that covered specified amounts of temporal satisfaction. The rights to peddle the profitable indulgence certificates were the subject of more than one quarrel between princes and church officials, with Albert of Brandenburg bidding a large sum for a monopoly of such privileges in his realm. This was

the spark that set off the Reformation explosion and led the Reformers to call in question the whole sacramental system. It has been attacked ever since by Protestant Christians.

We shall not enter here into the dispute about the validity of sacramental religion; but its nature should now be plain: it is salvation by works—though by a special kind of ritual work done according to a specified pattern within the framework of ecclesiastical authority. It goes hand in hand with a systematic legalism. It contributes tremendously to the power of the Church that exercises such a system; it touches life at the vital points of birth, marriage, and death, and places the key to the kingdom of eternal salvation within the power of those who administer the sacraments. It is not surprising that such a system exerts an almost absolute control over those who acknowledge its validity; and that it is feared by those who stand outside its structure as an instrument of undue influence.

### 3. *Salvation by Righteousness: Puritan Moralism*

Our final example of salvation by works may be harder to describe as such, or to fit as neatly into the pattern as the sacramental or legal examples; yet it is in some ways nearer the central meaning of the concept of works—at least as most people understand it. It approaches that broader understanding of works as good and virtuous deeds; it refers to the close relationship mankind has uniformly called for between good character and good religion.

We cannot discuss here the whole involved relation of morals to religion, except to say that in general everyone seems to assume that if beliefs modify conduct, then religious beliefs about the supreme issues and realities of life should modify men's character and actions more profoundly than any other sort. Men have frequently said to religious believers, along with St. James: "Show me your faith by your works." And almost as frequently, many within all religious folds have applied the essential principle—if not the actual words—of Jesus when he said, "by their fruits ye shall know them," in judging persons, conduct, and institutions within their own households of faith. Obviously it is a fruitage of solid moral deeds that is here referred to.

It is an impoverishment of religion, of course, to think of it as *only* a system of morals; such an account leaves out the richness of its ritual patterns, its relation to social groups, its sense of direct contact with the more-than-human, and its attempt to answer the fundamental questions concerning the meaning and purpose of human life. Such a view takes one of the desired results of religious living and tries to make it the whole structure of that life. Sometimes a religion itself, while recognizing the nonmoral dimensions of the religious view of life, may tend in its great ethical zeal to create a one-dimensional variety of



faith, and harshly criticize all others who will not follow its chosen interpretation; such is somewhat the nature of the Puritan's intensely moralistic version of religion. We must therefore be prepared to recognize both the worth of his moral seriousness in religious matters, and the rather one-sided version of religion he produces.

One other remark may be made about moralistic religion: it usually grows out of a protest against other types of religious expression. The religious moralist is suspicious of mere emotionalism in religion, for example, and hence tends to discount the way of devotion; he would prefer solid good deeds without so much excess excitement about them—especially in view of the persistent danger that such excitement may be taken as a valid substitute for the good deed itself. He is especially unfriendly to mysticism, which he looks on as evasive and dangerous, because of its pretensions to superior knowledge of God by direct insight and its disdain of pedestrian moral virtues; and that unfriendliness may ripen into active hostility when the mystic talks about being "above" good and evil.

Thus the moralist is often close in spirit to the legalist and the sacramentalist, because he, like them, is a man of works, not one of mystical or emotional raptures. Yet he may also be highly critical of his brothers in the way of works—particularly of the sacramentalist. His criticism would be that good works as interpreted by these other plans are oftentimes sham substitutes for the real thing; they are wooden idols in place of the living God. Their narrowly specialized version of doing ritually or legally prescribed things becomes a sheer formality, which has nothing to do with true moral character—indeed, often replaces it or hinders its growth. No one could exceed the Puritan, for instance, in his hostility to Catholic sacramentalism. He abhorred the authority claimed by that Church, and felt that its rites were superstitious, and its sacramental good works a crass commercialization of religious faith.

The particular species of Puritan whose moralistic faith we shall describe grew up in Europe as a fruit of the continental Reformation, and went on to prosper for a time in England and New England. Thus we shall not distinguish sharply between the European and American varieties, since they are in essence the same; and the American variety was frequently descended from the European, either religiously or biologically or both.

To understand the Puritan approach to religion we must understand something of his theology; for the Puritan's main drive was theological—for all that he was so moralistic, and sometimes turned into a moralist shorn of all religious quality. He was much persuaded of the truth of two basic doctrines: the absolute and holy sovereignty of God over the world, and the innate depravity or unholiness of man. From these twin convictions—sometimes supporting each

other, sometimes offering great difficulty in their harmonization in practice—sprang the tremendous moral and religious energy of the Puritan.

Of these two convictions the first was the more basic. The Puritan was heir to the Calvinist tradition; and if Calvin were persuaded of the truth of nothing else, he was sure that Jehovah God was absolute Lord over all existence. That is, He controlled all the universe, world without end, with the minor exception of the sinful heart of man, which might—and often did—rather unaccountably set itself against Him. Or just *perhaps*, for a short time and very mysteriously, He had chosen not to control fully the supernatural forces of evil that aided and abetted man's wickedness. Therefore the great inner drive of the Puritan. For though the Calvinist might speak in the Westminster Confession of "enjoying" God forever as one of the great purposes of human existence, and though a few great souls like Jeremy Taylor, Richard Baxter, and Jonathan Edwards might now and again gain a high, austere sense of splendor and glory in spite of the more rigorous aspects of their theology, the vast body of those influenced by Calvinism thought more of its strenuous side—that of gaining God's hard-to-win approval and avoiding His easily-come-by wrath. And that was because the Puritan idea of God was drawn primarily from a very literal reading of certain portions of the Old Testament, where He is defined as a "jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me," and where He also says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." His demands are absolute and His holiness austere; His justice cannot be evaded.

Obviously what immeasurably increased Puritan concern—and consequently Puritan zeal—to a fever heat, was the problem of fitting the second of his main convictions, "man is absolutely depraved," onto the first, "God is absolutely holy," and producing from the combination a workable plan of salvation. For if man is depraved by nature and sinful in his deeds, how can he possibly approve himself to God? If the imagination of his heart is to do evil continually, how can he please a holy God who delights in goodness? The answer of the Puritan was twofold: only by the utterly free gift of God's grace, plus man's most strenuous efforts.

And let it be emphasized that saving grace was God's gift, not man's desert. God gives grace to some to be saved—*i.e.*, He "elects" them to salvation; others he does not. This is called the doctrine of *predestination*, joint product of St. Paul's and St. Augustine's thoughts concerning God and man, worked over by Calvin. But no one can complain—not even the condemned, because they truly deserve their condemnation; they have sinned, and with perfect justice God can punish them eternally. And who are the chosen, the elect to salvation? They are those whom God in His inscrutable wisdom and mercy elects to glory. The



elect are probably very few; and even they themselves cannot be sure of their own salvation—only God knows who they are, and the reason they, but not others, are predestined to salvation—if there *is* a reason. Neither the private raptures of religious feeling nor the life of apparently good moral character are in themselves infallible assurances of election; for God chooses no man to salvation because he is religiously responsive or morally worthy. In view of the extreme subtlety of the human heart in sinfulness, no man ought to cherish the slightest hope of heaven without the double evidence of a heart warmed frequently by the movings of the Spirit of God, and a life characterized by abundant good character and worthy deeds. And even then, with all available evidence pointing toward his election, a man may be deceived.

Thus it is that the Puritan life was strenuous. Good works would not save a man by themselves, but they were an indispensable sign of God's grace working in the heart of man—one could certainly not be saved *without* them. Understandably the Puritan was frequently on the anxious seat, continually examining himself within and without for convincing evidences of God's approval. There are many Puritan diaries in existence in which these earnest souls are passing their motives, their thoughts, their use of time and material possessions in review, to see whether they are truly glorifying God to the maximum of their powers; the writer's faith, his high sense of purpose and calling, his sober industrious life, and his abundant zeal for God might assure him that he had the marks of the elect about him, and yet . . .

The result of such an earnest anxious quest for salvation was to drive the Puritan inexorably along his straight and narrow way of strenuous purpose. Not only was he striving to set a godly example (for the glory of God) in an ungodly world; he was also building up his own assurance of salvation. Outwardly he may have appeared coldly self-confident, and no doubt did easily slip into an arrogant, confident self-righteousness; for he was sure that the approval of God lay upon the Puritans and Puritan ideas *as a whole*. Yet—as in the case of the shy man turning aggressive in self-defence—the outer drive of the Puritan, more often than not, was an expression of his inner uncertainty.

The product of this religious persuasion has been well expressed in these words:

There was nothing lukewarm, half-hearted, or flabby about the Puritan; whatever he did, he did with zest and gusto. In that sense we might say that though his life was full of anguish of spirit, he nevertheless enjoyed it hugely. Existence for him was completely dramatic, every minute was charged with meaning. . . . In his inner life he was overwhelmingly preoccupied with achieving a union with the divine; in his external life he was predominantly concerned with self-restraint.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Miller and Johnson, *The Puritans*, American Book Company, 1938, p. 60.

We can see how very naturally Puritan zeal to approve oneself before God would express itself in moralistic patterns; indeed, how else does a holy God expect men to comport themselves in this world but by soberly virtuous lives? Puritanism represents the vigorous ethical strain of Judaism rising to the surface again in Christianity, the essence of the protest of the prophet against ritualism's taking the place of righteousness in religion. It sums up in the most strenuous form possible the whole Protestant protest against the moral laxness of the medieval Church, and particularly against the relaxed quality of the English Church piety of the 17th century. For the Puritan did not take Christian morality for granted—he took it fanatically in earnest. His true sacraments were not baptism and the Lord's Supper—though he did observe them—but strenuous obedience to the Ten Commandments; it was in the keeping of them rather than in ritual performance that he expected to find his salvation.

Thus Puritan communities were straight-laced. The Sabbath day was kept with a capital S; it was a day for serious business, not idleness; the Lord must be honored, and the Puritan's conscience instructed in the will of the Lord. He must solemnly renew his vows, and seek to keep the ardor of his faith unquenched; therefore he filled it with religious services comprised of lengthy preaching and praying. At all times he looked on frivolity with a forbidding eye—but especially on the Sabbath. But there was more to Puritan discipline than Sabbath-keeping. Puritanism's great interpreter in the 18th century, Jonathan Edwards, saw strong evidence of New England's depravity in its mild social dancing and merrymaking. Uniformly throughout Puritan New England sexual irregularities were severely punished, and drunkenness was disapproved—though, rather inconsistently, both “bundling” and drinking of hard liquors were allowed. Profane language was discouraged with fines or worse. Indeed the unrestrained life in any of its forms was to be checked by the strong, steady rein of individual self-control and social discipline.

Hand in hand with the sober, disciplined Sabbath went a frugal, abstemious daily life. The world was the Lord's and all that was in it; therefore daily business was holy, and the idle, the wastrel, and the spendthrift were almost as much abhorred as the ungodly and profane man who broke the Sabbath law and the Ten Commandments. Indeed, these two kinds of sin were, according to Puritan thought, often to be found together in the same individual; for the spendthrift usually spent his money on himself and his appetites, or in debauching others. But the man of God would be held to a strict accounting of the time, means, and strength his Master had given him as a steward. Therefore neither moments nor shillings must be wasted in any kind of fruitless living that would yield neither gain nor godliness.

In fairness to the Puritan, we should note that his righteousness was not



purely negative—either inwardly or outwardly. There is no doubt that inwardly he was afire with enthusiasm for God's greatness and glory; he was spiritually intoxicated by the doctrine of God's sovereignty, especially the more poetic Puritan—and there were such. He desired with all his heart to be an instrument by which the will of the holy God might be done on earth as in heaven. A poet of Puritan New England has put this longing into the following words, using the "conceit" of the spinning wheel:

Make me, O Lord, thy Spinning Wheele compleat.  
Thy Holy Worde my Distaff make for mee.  
Make mine Affections thy Swift Flyers neate  
And make my Soul thy holy Spoole to bee.  
My Conversation make to be thy Reelee  
And reele the yarn thereon Spun of thy Wheele.

Make me thy Loom then, knit therein this Twine:  
And make thy Holy Spirit, Lord, wind quills:  
Then weave the Web thyselfe.<sup>12</sup>

Nor for the Puritan was it vainglorious boasting or sheer heroics to say—as did Mrs. Jonathan Edwards—that she would be willing to be damned in eternal torment if it would forward the glory of God more than her salvation in heaven.

And if the inward life of the Puritan was not a dry and treeless desert of strict rule-keeping, neither was his outward expression of religion entirely one of repressions. If the world was rightly God's, and every man a steward of God's possessions in his daily life, then God's people must co-operate with Him in making that world more nearly accord with His will. In other words, his life led the Puritan inevitably into attempting to build a holy community, and to an active interest in state affairs. Negatively, he rebelled against the tyranny of post-Elizabethan England, which in his view sought ecclesiastical conformity without moral or spiritual reformation. Positively, he tried to build the Kingdom of God on earth by establishing the Cromwellian Protectorate in England and the Bible Commonwealth in New England; his hope was to establish godliness in contemporary society, by first creating a godly government that should rule in true righteousness and with pure faith. Every knee should bow and every tongue confess—even if the Puritan must somewhat stimulate the unwilling by coercive measures. He had a blue print for such a perfect state as he hoped to achieve. Richard Baxter has sketched at least its outline in his *A Holy Commonwealth*, which ranked almost second in authority to the Bible for New

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 651.

England Puritans. Two or three of his propositions show us the quality of his thought:

- Thesis 24. The World is a Kingdom whereof God is the King . . . and absolute Monarch.
- Thesis 58. That is the best form of Government to this or that people, that all things considered, doth most powerfully tend to their spiritual and everlasting welfare, and their Holiness, Obedience, and pleasing God. . . .
- Thesis 192. The more Theocratical, or truly Divine, any Government is, the better it is.

And he goes on to say that the "Electors," *i.e.*, voters, of such a commonwealth should be those who have "publicly owned the Baptismal Covenant," and who are not guilty of any of the sins for which ordinarily God would have men "put to death or cut off from his people," including among others "Blasphemy, Idolatry . . . obstinate refusing to obey Magistrate, Priest, or Parent, in case of Gluttony, Drunkenness, and the like."<sup>13</sup>

Thus did the Puritan zeal for glorifying God in all things carry him out of the contemplation of the secret states of his inmost soul into the world of action. He must be an instrument of God to establish His complete sovereignty in the world. In doing so he could not live indifferent to the world about him; indeed, his efforts to be a steward of the possessions God had given him involved him in that world whether he would or not. He must create communities in which the pious might be helped on their way to heaven and in which the impenitent should not damn themselves even more deeply. Perchance his efforts would be crowned by final success, in that he might deliver some portion of the world, pure and undefiled, into God's keeping at His Kingdom's coming.

The Puritan has left Western Christianity two heritages of unequal worth. One is a spirit of careful faithfulness about possessions that makes thrift and self-denying economy religious virtues of the first order—or even a religion of themselves; Benjamin Franklin, who saw in such virtues the supreme values of life, is a product of the Puritan spirit minus its deep religious devotion. The other heritage is a spirit of deep moral and social concern for the world in which men live. Though such a concern may become short-sightedly reformist or narrowly self-righteous, it undoubtedly expresses one of the essential aspects of the Christian faith, which other versions of it have neglected to their peril.

#### 4. *Critical Summary*

The formulation of a doctrine of salvation in terms of law, sacrament, and moral deed, has produced certain distinguishing characteristics in the religions

<sup>13</sup> Herbert W. Schneider, *The Puritan Mind*, Henry Holt, 1930, pp. 14 ff.



that so formulate it. Some few qualities of life are emphasized to the exclusion or neglect of others; corresponding characteristic religious attitudes are adopted; certain qualities of institutional life grow up in accordance with the conception of salvation as a way of works. What then shall we say by way of an evaluation of the common characteristics of these somewhat varied ways of working out man's salvation?

The basic attitude of all those who steadfastly follow the way of works is a tendency to *literal-mindedness* in religion. They look to a holy Scripture for direct guidance; they elaborate a definite code to govern every case; they prescribe a rigorous sacramental system that must be followed out in all its details. They wish to make every item of religious practice or belief unmistakably definite, and to avoid ambiguity or uncertainty in every form.

This literal-mindedness produces at least two effects. One is an undue emphasis on the *mechanics* of religion: the apparatus of salvation—the words to be said, the ritual actions to be performed, the rules to be kept, the deeds to be done, to obtain that salvation—is put in the center of attention. The external ritual and observable deed become in themselves all-important, while the inner life may go by the board. When this occurs we are traveling backward in religion, toward the primitive and the magical. Just around the next corner is the temptation to look on the apparatus or sacramental action as itself efficacious; to believe that if it is done in the correct manner God cannot resist its force and salvation will inevitably result.

The danger of a reversion to the near-primitive is greatest where the ritual aspect of religion is most strongly emphasized. It is true, of course, that legalisms such as we find in Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam have their own more subtle dangers in the same area: they come to assume automatically that their cultural pattern is the one supremely pleasing to God—one which by its maintenance insures salvation; and a Puritan moralism may fanatically enforce its conventional pattern of outward life almost as rigidly as a primitive society enforces its mode of existence. Yet it is the Roman Catholic whose sacramental deeds—the use of the sign of the cross, the priestly blessing on medal, eucharistic bread, or other object, the dipping of the finger in holy water, the praying the specified sum of prayers prescribed in penance—are in most danger of this perversion. Such sacramental deed may well come to be regarded much as the primitive regards his fetish or magic formula—a thing of sacred potency in itself or in its doing.

The second result of the literal-mindedness the way of works produces is an inelastic *authoritarianism*. The man of works has a Plan of Salvation, clear, definite, and guaranteed; he is sure that every one ought to embrace it, and that only the "invincibly ignorant" may be deemed free of sin if they do not.

He seeks to suppress religious irregularities or disruptive (and unpredictable) enthusiasms of conduct, creed, or ritual. He will use all the institutional force at his command to achieve such heaven-born uniformity as he desires. This is true of Puritan moralist, high-caste Brahmin, Orthodox Jew, conservative Moslem, or Roman Catholic prelate; witness the works of each in the Puritan commonwealths of England and New England, the Hindu caste law, Orthodox Jewish observance of the minutiae of the dietary law, the one-religion fanaticism of many Mohammedan countries, the medieval Catholic Inquisition and modern Spain. Those who do not conform are cast into prison, deprived of civil rights and social standing, and denied the sacraments, or excommunicated.

Such authoritarianisms tend to produce a static uniformity of religious belief, practice, and institution; every one of them has sought to preserve the *status quo*—providing it was the one which that Faith itself had produced. The Puritan in Massachusetts steadfastly fought against any liberalization of his law, and as long as possible refused voting rights to nonchurch members; the Hindu yielded not a whit of caste exclusiveness until forced to. Islamic countries have been notably unprogressive in every area; and in the midst of New York City the Orthodox Jew seeks to maintain unaltered his ancient way of life. Though Roman Catholicism has radically changed its pattern over the years, it constantly proclaims its unvarying uniformity of doctrine and sacramental form from the beginning of its history, and seeks to preserve it unchanged world without end.

Yet in almost every case, both within and without, this very rigidity has produced counter-forces. There are those within who have found the keeping of religious rules a valley of dry bones, a species of spiritual death—particularly the mystics and devotionalists. If the faith has not been able to accommodate them in its structure, they have become heretics—thus frequently depriving it of valuable spiritual insights and significant numbers of disciples (note the Protestant revolt from Rome). Or else it may be that two authoritarian orthodoxies are pitted against each other in deadly conflict. This we might illustrate with a whole series of religious wars—Hindus versus Moslems, Moslems versus Christians, and in our day Communism versus Catholicism. Thus do such orthodoxies explode, break, or collide, by the very forces they themselves create.

But the way of works is not composed of limitations and weaknesses alone; its articulation performs for religion some extremely necessary services. It represents the perception—sometimes lacking in religious circles—that religion must live in a world that includes a concrete physical order of nature and a social order of human beings. If it is to deal with such a world—and how can it help doing so?—it must achieve expression of its thought in specific terms or visible symbols. It must describe in some formulated code the kind of moral



value it cherishes, give body to its fellowship in organized institutions, and enter perceptibly into the life of its contemporary culture.

Thus the way of works has produced its creeds, codes, rituals, institutions—indeed most of the external marks of religious life. Though it is subject to the dangers of externalism in all its forms, it is a counterweight to the weaknesses of mysticism and devotionism; it demands of both that they give intellectual and moral account of themselves. It calls the mystic to state precisely what he has seen in his all-engrossing vision, and in such terms that ordinary men can understand him; it urges the man of strong religious emotion to balance his feeling with thinking, and to channel the force of his fervor into solid deeds.

And, perhaps even more importantly, it calls the religious man out of the seclusion of his own private vision and feeling into the life of fellowship with his neighbor. Mysticism and emotionalism both tend to be individualistic—perhaps to the extreme—and forget their relation to the world of society about them; they are, so to speak, all spirit and no body. But the man of works is an institutionalist; he is sure that the spirit of religion must have a body as well. He believes that the religious vision or feeling should be made available to others, given outward expression, and solidified by institutional form; only thus can it gear into the kind of actuality this world represents. Therefore he calls on men of faith to make definite commitments, choose courses of real action, and associate themselves with their brethren to achieve their own and the world's salvation.

This leads us to a final point: the way of works is fundamentally optimistic. (Hindu caste law is a partial exception; yet even in this instance there was solid evidence of an upward climb to salvation by the caste ladder, visible evidence of a progressive spiritual order.) The way of works believes that there is something real and valuable about the concrete human and natural world; it is not to be fled from, but dealt with. And it can be dealt with in hopeful terms. True thoughts may be thought about it; some kinds of conduct are better suited to it than others, will permanently affect human life for good, and will achieve man's salvation; the moral and spiritual may be meaningfully related to the world of time and space. The world, indeed, has been built in such wise that men may find in it a way of goodness and truth; it is the expression of a Divine Life that encompasses man on every side. And that Divine Life has not left itself without a clear witness, but has provided man with a sure way to his ultimate salvation.

## Chapter XXII

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### THE WAY OF DEVOTION: FAITH AND LOVE

#### 1. *Its Nature*

The way of reaching salvation through devotional means, by faith and love, has grown up quite directly out of men's religious needs, and frequently in some degree of opposition to the other two modes of salvation. It has forced itself on the religiously expert, even when they despised it as cheap and common; it has compelled leaders of rigid orthodoxies to take account of it, whether they would or no; almost unaware it has seeped into their structures of thought, institution, and ritual. Or else it has achieved the proportions of a tidal wave of popular fervor that all their feeble forbiddings were unable to hold back. And so the solitary mystic and the authoritarian man of works have been forced to move over and allow a third way of salvation to take its influential place in the religious life.

Arising, as it often does, from popular demand, the way of devotion challenges the adequacy of both the way of mysticism and way of works as ways of salvation. It protests the aristocracy of the former; for mysticism—as we shall see later—is only for those few who are skilled and disciplined enough to follow it into the higher regions of meditation and abstruse speculation. Mysticism has nothing much to say to the common man but often leaves him—rather superciliously—to his idolatries. Devotion also protests the lifeless uniformities of the way of works. For the way of works everything must be “regular”—that is, according to an orthodox and rigid pattern of some sort. Warmth of emotion and depth of experience are largely discounted; cold correctness is of the essence. Thus it was said in Hinduism, where a revolt against both mysticism and sacramentalism took place: “The mystic way is for the wise; sacrifices are for the rich; but the way of devotion is for the people.” One of the disciples of Ramakrishna, that modern apostle of the way of devotion in Hinduism, recommends the path of devotion as

the easiest, best and most practicable of all paths. To go to God you do not need



any money, you do not have to buy a ticket. . . . He is inside you . . . go inside and realize Him. . . . To do this you must have an intense yearning. If once . . . you recognize your real relation to Him—that he is your real father and mother . . . then you will be infinitely rewarded.<sup>1</sup>

More often than not the leaders of devotional movements have come up from the people without any previous training or without “regular standing” among the orthodox leaders—for there is a kind of democracy found here that is missing in the other ways. Ramakrishna was a Brahmin, but deliberately disregarded caste rules, and “got away” with it as a holy man. John Bunyan, Baptist preacher and writer in 17th century England, was a tinker’s son; and John Wesley, though Oxford educated and ordained in the Established Church, turned with his message to the miners and factory workers. Gerhard Groot’s Brothers of the Common Life were obscure priests and laymen; St. Francis, a tradesman’s son, ministered to the poor and outcast classes of Italian society; George Fox, founder of the Quakers, was unordained in any church, and got most of his education from the common schools and from reading the Bible. And in modern American society it is noteworthy that the devotional sects find both leaders and followers among the disinherited economic classes.

Leadership in the way of devotion is, then, not a matter of having come through the regular orthodox channels of training—though now and then one thus trained may gain such leadership; it is of the Spirit of God, which—like the wind—“bloweth where it listeth.” Power for leadership may come to rest on the humblest; indeed, it seems more frequently to be found there than among the learned, or those raised by the religious organization to positions of official leadership. For the learned are often too proud and self-willed to heed divine leadings; and the chosen ones are products of a human choice—often made for selfish and unworthy reasons. Human election to an office of ecclesiastical leadership does not automatically or inevitably bestow divine graces, as George Fox and many others have reminded us.

The way of devotion is therefore in essence a layman’s religion; it is his form of mysticism, and his substitute for sacramentalism. In it he is able to by-pass the intricate ceremonial of the sacramentalist, the rigid requirements of the legalist, and the heavy hand of the institutionalist. He can cut these Gordian knots with the sword of flaming love, and respond directly to divine leadings, without the mediation of a priest or the interpretation of a professional teacher. He can match the emotional intensity of the mystic trance; and with the same vivid sense of a direct experience of ultimate reality as the mystic achieves, he can go on—as the mystic usually cannot—to give himself to the active service of

<sup>1</sup> Ramakrishnananda, *The Message of Eternal Wisdom*, R. K. Math, Madras, 1938, pp. 80, 199.

a cause, or in loyalty to a religious institution, or to a life of benefit to his fellows. For the devoted life is the dedicated or consecrated life—a life in which everything from washing pots and pans to serving at the high altar is done for the glory of God. It is a kind of *emotional* mysticism, or direct emotional contact with God, which the majority can appropriate—not just the few; it has the kind of warmth that even the sacramentalist or law-maker must call upon finally if his works are to be more than lifeless skeletons.

In the nature of the case, however, devotional forms of religion have less definite or distinctive structures than either of the other two ways of salvation. For devotion is usually a quality rather than a quantity; or perhaps even better—an adjective rather than a noun. It attaches itself to other things, intensifies *their* qualities, changes *their* emphases, but is not distinct in itself; it is a psychological attitude, more often than a doctrinal statement. In mathematical terms, it is that power to which another entity is raised, but not itself an entity.

Therefore we must be prepared for a wide variety of manifestations in this area, because devotionalism has attached itself to many differing institutions and produced a wide diversity of practice. This is because it gains most of its actual content from those religious contexts of which it becomes a part. Thus in Christianity devotionalism does not create many doctrines, but—appropriating the constructions of the sober theologian—it raises them to a higher emotional power by its intensity of devotion to them. So it is that the devotional way of salvation may express itself equally well in terms of a rich emotional attachment to the Catholic sacramental structure, or to the creeds of the Protestant fundamentalist, or in the creation of the fervidly enthusiastic methods of revivalism.

Yet the way of devotion has not been entirely chameleon-like—a mere religious adjective attached indiscriminately to any religious manifestation that came along. It has selected certain favorite patterns of practice or features of religious living, and held them up for the special attention of the religious world. *Faith* and *love* are its favorite words in all faiths. By “faith” it means a living confidence in Reality or God—not a mere catalogue of intellectual wares on hand in the religious cupboard. By “love” it means a devoted loyalty that leads to the utter giving of the self to God, church, and man. So it is that we may distinguish the devotionalists in all faiths by the religious attitudes and traits they choose to emphasize.

There are also some doctrinal emphases rather common to—or even characteristic of—all the varieties of devotional religion. The most important of these is its generally personal, theistic viewpoint in matters theological. This is perhaps a direct result of its particular psychological character; for devotion is a very personal affair in all its forms, both in its giving and receiving. The atti-



tude of devotion—that is, the qualities of faith and love—is always more at home when it is directed toward *someone* rather than *something*. Hence it almost uniformly thinks of God as personal, and conceives its relations to Him best expressed through such two-way, response-demanding forms of devotion as prayer and worship, rather than one-way meditations on impersonal truths.

Indeed, we may go one step further, and say that the intensity of religious devotion tends to fasten itself exclusively on one center; such devotion cannot widely scatter its attention. Which is to say that most religious faiths capable of producing the devotional pattern of salvation are personal monotheisms in their theology. Or, to frame it another way: the devotional approach to religion not only produces outright monotheisms, but also tends to create a personal theistic emphasis in an initially atheistic context (like early Buddhism), and in a monistic and pantheistic thought pattern (like philosophic Hinduism); or to initiate a monotheistic trend in the midst of a luxuriant polytheism (like popular Hinduism). As a matter of historical fact all these developments actually did take place, as we shall later observe in more detail.

And on occasion also, devotionism has created its own institutions; this has occurred in the main where the religious context out of which it arises has rather thoroughly suppressed or side-tracked such manifestations. Hinduism and Buddhism—from which two of our examples will be taken—during a considerable period of their existence did discourage the emotional interpretation of religion; thus resulted the bhakti cults, and the Amida Buddhist sect of Japan. John Wesley's early Methodism was in part a reaction against the cold formalism of the Anglican Church life of his time; and Aimee Semple McPherson's Foursquare Gospel was a similar reaction against a similar quality in modern Protestantism. St. Francis and Margaret Mary Alacoque are Catholic expressions of the rather universal human yearning for ecstatic emotional expression, which could not find its full satisfaction in ordinary parish Catholicism.

It will be observed that we have not thus far included Confucianism, Shintoism, Judaism, or Islam among our examples of devotional piety; nor shall we do so in our detailed treatments. This is primarily because the emotional forces of these religions and their environing cultures have been channeled in other patterns than that of the devotional cult. China and Japan are indeed both represented to some extent in Amida Buddhism, which had its birth as a religion in China and its most distinctive development in Japan. In China it represented one of the important ways in which was expressed the Chinese emotional force—left largely untouched by Confucianism. In Japan it is something of an alternative to Shintoism, though not completely exclusive of it; one may give his more specifically "religious" emotions to Buddhism and his "patriotic" devotion

to Shinto. Probably Shintoism arouses more actual emotional fervor in modern Japan, however, than Amidism, but it is carefully controlled and channeled from above.

Judaism and Islam have handled their emotional forces in a different way, and one that seems to satisfy their needs. Judaism, for instance, focuses its main emotional forces on maintaining its community structure against all attack—and there has been in its history much of such attack. For the Orthodox Jew this emotion is expressed in intense loyalty to the whole dietary and ritual pattern of historic Judaism; for others it is a more general devotion to the Jewish community and its growth. And Islam has rather successfully tied the emotions of the faithful to a single-minded loyalty to Allah and the practice of the simple rites of the faith. Its excursion into mysticism in the 9th to the 15th centuries was the nearest it came to a specialized emotional expression; but in the end this resulted in a rather general raising of the emotional temperature of the traditionalist orthodoxy, without creating either a distinctive devotional pattern or permanently enduring and important mystical groups.

## 2. *Types of Devotional Faith and Practice*

The varieties of devotional religious expression we shall examine, then, are these: (1) Hindu *bhakti* cults of devotional faith, with particular attention to Ramakrishna, who was a modern disciple of emotionalism in religion; (2) Amida Buddhism, which has aroused and centered the emotional devotion of many Buddhists on one particular incarnation of the Buddha; (3) a comparison of two classic expressions of devotional religion in the Christian tradition, St. Francis of Assisi and John Wesley, Catholic and Protestant respectively; (4) a comparison of two modern cults of an emotionally supercharged, high-pressure piety, likewise in Catholic and Protestant churches—namely, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Foursquare Gospel. We should not imagine that these are the only areas in which emotion plays its part in these great traditions—far from it, for religion in all its forms is heavily freighted with emotion. Yet in our illustrations we have some of devotionalism's special products, which represent its peculiar emphases and viewpoints in their clearest and most distinctive forms; as such we shall study them.

### a. *Hindu Bhakti: A Devotional Faith*

#### (1) *Characteristics*

One might think that mystical, polytheistic, and pantheistic Hinduism would be the last place in which to find cults of intensely emotionalized devotion to a single god or goddess; but actually—as we have already hinted—it was the



presence of those very qualities in Hinduism that negatively accounted for the rise of its devotional cults. For its pantheism, which distributed the God-substance equally everywhere in the world, put Him nowhere in any form to which devotion could profitably attach itself; the many gods of its polytheism scattered the force of religious devotion over many centers and thus weakened it; the high, dry mysticism of the Hindu philosopher-saint was beyond the power and alien to the temperament of many would-be disciples; the ancient sacrificial cult no longer carried conviction, and was weighted in favor of the few who could make rich offerings; and, finally, the all-engulfing caste system made salvation the privilege of a minority who sat at its topmost level. Bhakti is a revolt against all these: it is a religion for the masses, fitted to their powers, to their means, and to their religious needs.

The word itself is difficult to translate. Often it is simply called "faith"—but this carries too much of the creedal connotation. And the word "love" scarcely does it justice either—though there is much talk about love among the followers of the bhakti way. Indeed, the term Bhagavad or "Adorable One" is the term most commonly applied to whatever incarnation of God the bhakti sect may worship. Also the followers of this way are called *bhagavatas*, "the adoring ones," distinguished from others not only by their theological views but also by distinctive religious caste marks. The term is best translated perhaps as "devotional faith," which may be defined as "an affection fixed on the Lord"—"Lord" meaning God in whatever form He is worshiped in a particular cult.

The term bhakti was first used religiously about 400 B.C. Two hundred years later, when some of the earlier portions of the great Bhagavat scriptures were written, its meaning as a devotional religious attitude was well established, though its real and widespread practice came much later. The *Bhagavad-gita*, or "Song to the Adorable One," is the favorite of all these scriptures. The main personage of the "Song" is Krishna, originally a hero warrior; he it is who first calls the god Vishnu, "Bhagavad."

Though the Gita contained its raw materials, the religion of the Adorable One did not appear in distinctive form for many more centuries, because traditional priestly Brahmanism captured the movement in its beginning. The latter was willing to recognize Vishnu as the personal form or incarnation of the great impersonal Reality which it called Brahman. Indeed, it went farther; it called Krishna, the hero, an incarnation or *avatar* of Vishnu, and encouraged men to worship him. But in capturing this new and promising pattern of faith, Brahmanism subtly depersonalized all its ostensibly personal incarnations into little more than fleeting manifestations of the great impersonal Reality. The true Bhagavat reformation, which opened the gates of salvation to all men through devotional faith, did not come to India till the 15th century A.D., under

the preaching of Ramananda and his successors. Since that time bhakti has been a major factor in Hinduism—perhaps the most dynamic of all modern Hindu religious developments—and has many million adherents.

The personalizing, monotheizing tendency of religious devotionism, which we noted in the introduction, is eminently observable here. In the midst of a luxuriant polytheism bhakti cults single out their special gods for supreme and exclusive worship. Most of them worship Vishnu, the ancient cow-herd god, and are called Vaisnavites. A smaller but important group of some millions worship Shiva, the ancient Hindu god of creative force and violent destruction, and are called Shivaite. Thus bhakti emotionally seized on certain of the ancient gods which were still cherished by popular faith, even after the many centuries during which the aristocratic forms of pantheism and mysticism dominated the scene and sought to depersonalize their worship. And now, with the coming of the religious rank and file into their own, their gods come with them, in renewed and revitalized forms.

Probably no Jew, Christian, or Moslem would be satisfied that the Vaisnavite or Shivaite was a true monotheist—though he may *seem* to worship God under only one name and form. For the Hindu “monotheist” allows a mystifying and illogical equation in his monotheistic faith. Consequently Vaisnavites are divided into two main groups, one of which worships Krishna and the other Rama (another ancient hero described in the *Ramayana* epic poem), as incarnations of Vishnu. Thus the equation reads: Krishna or Rama = Vishnu = Brahman, or the reverse order. It can be said that they worship impersonal Brahman under the aspect of Vishnu under the aspect of Krishna (or Rama). And—still further to increase the confusion of the Western monotheist—worshippers of Rama and Krishna are willing to allow not only each other’s worship as valid, but the worship of the Shivaite as well, who would in turn construct a similar equation, with the substitution of Shiva for Vishnu, and other avatars to replace Rama and Krishna.

It may be hard for us to rationalize such a many-headed monotheism—though all Christians have their own similar problem with the Trinity, and Catholic Christians a still greater problem with the Virgin Mary and the saints added to the Trinity for a species of veneration that seems little short of worship. But the Hindu loves the ancient story of the five blind men who visit the elephant, and each from his special hold on trunk, tail, leg, tusk, and flank, variously describe the elephant as like a snake, a rope, a pillar, a spear, and a wall, and dispute fiercely about which opinion is correct. Or he likes to point out that the same roof can be reached by rope, wooden ladder, or staircase. “What does it matter,” says he, “how you name God: Shiva, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna,



Brahman, or by a host of other names? He is the same God, one in essence, but appearing in many forms."

What then is bhakti's case for a man's devoting himself so exclusively to one particular manifestation of God—if it is but a name? He must do so because that particular manifestation of God is best suited to his personal condition and upbringing. A disciple of Ramakrishna puts it thus: though a daughter-in-law may fully and freely associate with her in-laws, her husband is her special love and care, and her earthly God. And there are other analogies. Ramakrishna himself—though the most liberal of men with regard to religious differences—suggests that it is better when journeying to Calcutta to follow the directions of one guide than continually to switch from the old guide to a series of new ones. The man who starts to dig a well for water should continue to dig in one spot, rather than begin several others before finishing the first. Use that idea of the divine, he would say, which has the greatest God-value for you. "In order to meet with success, we should devote ourselves entirely to a single object of faith, without being doubtful as to its efficacy."<sup>2</sup>

Such a reading of religion thus tolerantly allows worth to all ways of salvation, but recognizes the special worth of the specific way for a given individual; and when you have chosen your own particular variety of God-manifestation, you should serve God in that form wholeheartedly, with all your zeal and power. On this all *bhaktas* (followers of the bhakti way) are strongly insistent. The quality of one's devotion, they would say, is more important than its object; if your devotion to God is strong and pure enough, it will burn up all lesser and unworthy passions in its consuming fire—under whatever name you serve Him. Ramakrishna wrote as follows:

When he acquires such a bhakti, it purifies his mind from all passions and impurities, and destroys all the bonds of his deeds and their fruits. . . . So great is his passion for God that it consumes all his earthly passions. It stands by itself. As a great spring of happiness, it is ultimate and complete.<sup>3</sup>

Still further, the bhakti cults teach that this discipline of a supreme devotion is not to be considered as that kind of a rooting out of the affections the mystic and ascetic call for, but a changing of their object or direction. "The desires are to be given full play *in the direction of God*. Desires are not to be distinguished; only their directions are to be changed."<sup>4</sup> All the emotions are to be channeled Godward; even hate and rebellion are not to be suppressed, but in all their vehemence directed toward God. In the end such a channeling of one's total

<sup>2</sup> *Ramakrishna, His Life and Sayings*, Longmans, Green, 1910, p. 133.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>4</sup> S. N. Das Gupta, *Hindu Mysticism*, Open Court, 1927, p. 143.

soul force will work a transformation; nothing of the wholeness of a man will be left out of his service of God.

In keeping with this totality of emotional approach to God, the love of God is to be conceived in all possible ways. Krishna devotees are urged to think of him as lover, husband (or wife), and Lord—thus combining in one unit of emotion the delights of illicit love, the tranquillity of married affection, and the sublimity of religious adoration. Nor was Hinduism slow to take such a suggestion into its devotional literature; one finds there the suggestion that only those deeply experienced in sexual love can know divine love. And many passages would seem extravagantly erotic to English ears—or even obscene—especially when used in worship. The connotation for Hindus is not as shocking; phallic symbolism and sexual motifs have been unashamedly used for many centuries in India's religious rituals; and the prostitute who is dedicated to the service of a temple god and his male worshipers is by no means a creature only of the past.

Bhakti emotionalism is not always erotic, however; and even the erotic imagery sometimes used in worship is supposedly sublimated by its application to the god who is adored. There is a modern tendency, too, to spiritualize the erotic. For example, the amorous exploits of the god Krishna among the milkmaids are said to be a symbol of his divine love for man—much in the same way that Christians have interpreted the Song of Solomon to be a celebration of the love of Christ for his church. But emotional overflow, even emotional extravagance, remains the hallmark of bhakti. For the bhakta, indeed, the strength of his emotion is the authentication of the genuineness of his religious life. A modern interpreter states it graphically:

The bhakta who is filled with such a passion [toward God] does not experience it merely as an under-current of joy which waters the depths of his heart in his own privacy, but as a torrent that overflows the caverns of his heart into all his senses. Through all his senses he realizes it as if it were a sensuous delight; with his heart and soul he feels it as a spiritual intoxication of joy. Such a person is beside himself with this love of God.<sup>5</sup>

Or here is the testimony of a saint who has experienced such emotion himself:

Briefly, Saint Nam Alvar declares that when one is overcome by bhakti exaltation, trembling in every cell of his being, he must freely and passively allow this influence to penetrate his being, and carry him beyond all known states of consciousness; never from fear or shame that bystanders may take him for a madman, ought the exhibition of this bhakti-rapture that deluges his being, to be suppressed. This very madness is the means of distinguishing him from the ordinary mortals to

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.



whom such beatific vision is necessarily denied. The very madness is the bhakta's pride. In that very madness, the saint exhorts "run, jump, cry, laugh and sing, and let every man witness it."<sup>6</sup>

The followers of *bhakti-marga* (the way of bhakti or devotion) form a sort of religious third force between mysticism on the left and the legalistic and sacramental religion of the Brahmin on the right. Indeed, some of its enthusiastic proponents are not satisfied to interpret it as we have—as an easy way fitted for the masses. They would suggest that it is superior to the way of mysticism, for example, in that it is more adequate as religion; it can do everything that mysticism can do, and some other things besides. One of Ramakrishna's disciples urges that the manifestation of God in personal form (as Rama, Krishna, Kali) is superior in every way to the mystic's conception of Reality as a nonpersonal Absolute; the personal manifestation shows the Absolute limiting himself by becoming person in order that he may be familiarly known or "played with" by his followers. Besides, the spiritualizing power of intense bhakti devotion is the same in effect as the mystic discipline of meditation. And, actually, it may be that the mystical hope of escape or liberation from conscious existence is mistaken. The bhaktas are not willing to renounce such existence, for they

come to experience such intense happiness that all their limbs and senses become saturated therewith and their minds swim, as it were, in a lake of such supreme bliss that even the bliss of ultimate liberation loses its charm.<sup>7</sup>

Even God may be defined, not as a measureless abyss into which the individual is absorbed without remainder upon death, but as *ananda* or bliss, presumably to be enjoyed forever by the saintly bhakta's immortal spirit.

And, on the other side, the bhaktas proclaim the superiority of their way to the way of sacramental good works and the careful observance of caste rules, which is supposed to build up good Karma that will bring a man to a new and better rebirth in his next life. Most such observances are deadwood, say the bhaktas—cold, formal externalities that actually produce no Karma. But even if they were sincere—and hence would produce good Karma—their effect would be only temporary; one would be put up the hill of spiritual attainment a bit farther, but would still be subject to rebirth, still bound inexorably to the series of continuing existences. Anyway, it is actually the *spirit* of the work that counts; hence good works are not to be thought of as a mechanical and calculable piling up of merits, but as a sheer service of love to one's God. The loving thought, the flower garland, the trinket given for love of God with no thought

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

of reward or final liberation, are worth as much as a gift of gold or many oxen. And, paradoxically, such gifts may bring one to liberation; whereas the greater but unworthy gift may further bind one to the Wheel of Life.

(2) *Ramakrishna: Bhakti Guru and Saint*

Very important in the bhakti cults is the institution of *guru*—if the guru may be called an institution; for the guru is a rather unofficial and somewhat irregular individual. He is to his pupils religious teacher, father confessor, and near-god. Ideally every Brahmin youth is put during his period of study under the tutelage of an eminent guru. But the institution has never been completely regularized within priestly ranks, for much of its success depends on spiritual compatibility of pupil and master, and such relations cannot be officially ordained. Therefore the guru is a kind of free-lance spiritual guide, who attracts pupils to himself by the quality of his life and teachings—whatever his official standing or lack of it. To bhakti groups, who gain inspiration more from personal contact with the emotionally vital person than from doctrinal precept, the guru is therefore indispensable. New sects are continually growing up about such gurus, and their genius is the focal point of the new group life. Ramakrishna never took on himself such a title, but was accorded it by many of his disciples (just as his contemporaries called Jesus “rabbi,” though he had no formal training); and for our purposes we may consider him as such.

He was born under the name of Gadadhar Chatterji, near Calcutta, in 1834. His father was a poor but devout Brahmin who early trained his son in ways of piety. The son showed from the very first an unusual propensity for religion. When he was orphaned at 17 he was therefore apprenticed as a ministrant to the household gods of local Hindu families, and at the age of 21 made assistant to an elder brother who was head priest in a Calcutta temple recently erected for the worship of the goddess Kali, consort of Shiva.

A word about Kali is in order, since she was Ramakrishna's first and last religious love. She is the goddess of energy or force (*shakti*) as it appears in nature. She is alike the life-giving creative force of nature and its destructive power, with now one, now the other aspect emphasized. She may be worshiped through intercourse with the temple prostitutes, or through bloody animal sacrifices; her liturgies are full of erotic and violent language. She is often pictured as an Amazonian creature with four arms who grasps a bloody sword and a severed head in two of her hands; she also wears a garland of smaller heads about her neck, and tramples on the slain bodies of her enemies. To this unlovely creature—“Mother” Kali he called her—Ramakrishna gave his passionate devotion. He would sit for hours before her images, in long emotional



ecstasies, during which he was totally unaware of anything or anyone about him; obviously he was largely useless as a temple priest.

After four years at the temple he set out in quest of his own personal salvation. The next twelve years he spent in seeking different ways of union with God—or the “realization of God,” as he called it. He tried many kinds of austerities, seeking to humble his Brahmin pride by doing menial tasks about temples. He accepted the young wife to whom his parents had betrothed him in his childhood as one of his disciples—only under vow of perpetual and mutual chastity. He experimented with the yogin techniques of breath control to induce trance or dream states. Successively he tried life as a Moslem, Vaisnavite, and Christian; and in each case he claimed to have seen heavenly visions. As a Christian he was “unable for three days after to think or speak of anything else but of [Jesus] and his love.”<sup>8</sup>

In time he acquired a considerable body of followers, including some professional scholars, who were attracted by the spirituality of his conversation, by his constant sense of God-realization—evidenced by his spontaneous joy—and by his passionate devotion to Kali. Uneducated as he was, he did not pretend to mystical expertness nor to teach new doctrine; yet he frequently experienced ecstatic trances, and often spoke in parables. And though he refused the title of guru, he would frequently put on his head the garlands brought to the temples to honor various gods, and calmly speak of himself as the incarnation of the same spirit that had dwelt in Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, and other holy men. In place of his personal name he adopted the religious name Ramakrishna—a compound of the names of the two gods of the Vaisnavites.

Of one thing Ramakrishna was supremely sure: his passionate devotion to Mother Kali, in whose worship he finally came to rest, had procured genuine God-realization for him. Passionate love to God in some one of His forms—it did not matter greatly which—was the supreme way of salvation for all men. And so for the rest of his life—until death from a throat cancer in 1886—Ramakrishna continued to talk with every breath of the love of God. A few quotations will illustrate the content of his teaching:

A logician once asked . . . : “What are knowledge, knower, and the object known?” To which he replied, “Good man, I do not know all these niceties of scholastic learning. I know only my Mother Divine, and that I am Her son.”

“. . . When the Lord does come, the heart of the devotee will melt in divine emotion, and his loud utterances will all cease forever. The Lord cannot delay his coming when man calls upon him from the depths of his heart overflowing with deep love and devotion.

Devotional practices are necessary only so long as tears of ecstasy do not flow at

<sup>8</sup> “Ramakrishna,” *Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. X, 567 ff.

hearing the name of [God]. He needs no devotional practices whose heart is moved to tears at the mere mention of the name of [God].<sup>9</sup>

#### b. *Amida Buddhism*

If at first glance polytheistic and pantheistic Hinduism seem a strange place to find a cult of warm personal devotion to one god above all others, how much more so a religion which began as something of an atheistic moralism. It is no doubt true that Gautama Buddha would scarcely recognize the things that are done and said in his name in Amida Buddhism today as having anything to do with his original way. Yet the fact is that Amidism has actually grown out of the Buddhist tradition, considers itself to be Buddhist, and is so accepted by other Buddhist sects.

Of course the process of transformation into Amidism was a long one. Gautama, the Buddha, lived and died in India in the 6th century B.C., whereas the three sutras (collections of Buddha's supposed dialogues) that are the main scriptures of Amida Buddhism were written no earlier than the 1st century A.D.—maybe some of their parts much later. And the Amitabha (who became the Japanese Amida), whom the Amidist scriptures glorify as the supreme Buddha, is only rather casually mentioned in the older and "more orthodox" Buddhist writings as one of five incarnations of the Buddha. Yet in fairness it must be said that the Amidists are not alone in their work of transformation, nor chronologically the latest. Some of the scriptures accepted by those we (not they) generally consider the more orthodox Buddhists are as late in the date of their composition as the Amidist scriptures; and even in the orthodox scriptures of later vintage the earthly teacher of morals (Gautama) has been transformed into the latest manifestation of the eternal Buddha, who has appeared on earth many times already. We may say that Amidist scriptures and practices are but an extreme and one-sided extension of *some* of the elements found in *all* the later Buddhist writings.

Though it took some time for the elements characteristic of modern Amidism to work themselves out into their present form, these early first-century scriptures set the pattern; they very distinctly set the way of devotion, or faith, over against the way of works in all its forms—moral, legal, or sacramental. One passage puts it thus:

Beings are not born in that Buddha country [later Buddhism's Heaven] as a reward and result of good works done in this life. No, all men and women who hear and bear in mind for seven nights, or even only one, the name of Amitayus

<sup>9</sup> *Ramakrishna, His Life and Sayings*, pp. 120, 178, 180.



[Amida], when they come to die, Amitayus will stand before them in the hour of death, they will depart this life with quiet minds and will be reborn in Paradise.<sup>10</sup>

This is not far different in tone from expressions made centuries later in Japan. Honen, 12th century founder of Japanese Amidism, put down his beliefs on the "document of one sheet" just before his death. In his brief summary of the essentials of faith he says:

. . . All that is needed to secure birth in the Paradise of perfect bliss is merely to repeat the words *Namu Amida Butsu* [reverence to Amida Buddha] without a doubt that one will certainly arrive there.<sup>11</sup>

Nor for that matter is there any great difference in either statement from a modern Amidist statement of faith:

Rejecting all other religious practices and works and all idea that I can help myself, I pray wholeheartedly to Amida for my salvation in the life to come which is the most important of all things. I believe that the moment I have faith in him my entry into the life of paradise is certain and I exult in the thought that henceforth invocation of his name is an expression of thankfulness.<sup>12</sup>

The latter statement is from the "One Calling" School of Amidism founded by one of Honen's disciples. This group believes that only one calling on the name of Amida Buddha is necessary for salvation—provided it be done with full faith in its efficacy; all other "callings"—that is, prayers or repetitions of the name—are over and above what is necessary to one's salvation; they might possibly help convert a hearer, but could do nothing additional for the man himself. Honen, indeed, had expelled from his group an early exponent of this view, and maintained that one should spend long hours repeating the Sacred Name, thousands of times per day. (This would appear to be a kind of sacramental good work to obtain salvation, somewhat contrary to the faith ideal.) But the one-calling version rapidly became more popular and today numbers at least four times as many adherents as the many-callings persuasion.

That a religion should require no more than this for salvation may seem incredible; and yet it is very nearly the case. There are some signs that when the Amida cult passed through China on its way to Japan, meditation on Amida Buddha and the Buddha-land was prescribed as part of the discipline. Here was a partial practice, at least, of the rigorous meditative technique of early Buddhism—which we shall describe in the next chapter—even though watered down. And the early proponents of the way in China and Japan, including

<sup>10</sup> Charles Eliot, *Japanese Buddhism*, Edward Arnold, 1935, p. 106.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 377.

Honen himself, were at pains to admit the worth of other and more strenuous ways of salvation, to avoid the suspicion that they were letting down the spiritual bars.

Yet from its very beginnings in Japan, the way to Amida's Buddha-land was made as easy as possible. It was deliberately tailored for the common man; Honen stated explicitly that he founded his Jodo sect "to show ordinary man how to be born into Buddha's own country";<sup>13</sup> in his degenerate age, he said, men could no longer practice the severe discipline of the early days of Buddhism. His later disciples (Shinran and his Shinsu sect) came to the point of insisting that only Amida be worshiped. Indeed, the name Shaka, the Japanese term for the historic Gautama Buddha, is almost entirely dropped; it remains in use only in one of the ancient funeral rituals, and even there somewhat accidentally. So, also, the ancient distinction between the way of salvation followed by the monk and the lesser discipline of the layman, has been almost entirely obliterated; for all practical purposes the monk has descended to the level of the layman.

Still we ask: "Has Amidism nothing at all to say about any kind of good moral life? Is the gate open to Amidists for any kind of immorality?" This does not follow, because Amidists are Japanese before they are Amidists, and the rules of Japanese propriety rather closely pattern their behavior. Honen, indeed, kept reminding his disciples and detractors alike that good conduct was emphasized throughout Amidism, and that deliberate sinning in order that Amida's forgiving grace might abound was *not* what he meant.

While believing that even a man guilty of the ten evil deeds and the five deadly sins may be born into the Pure Land [by repeating the formula], let us for our part not be guilty of the smallest sins.<sup>14</sup>

Yet the logic of some of his other words was against him: "If you have any time to spare after saying the Nembutsu, then you may apply it to good works."<sup>15</sup> Thus good works are placed in the category of the admirable-but-not-necessary. And actually, if his disciples carried out his injunctions about frequent repetitions of the Nembutsu, there would not be too much time left over for good works. Others were less concerned about morals and more about logic. One small sect called themselves Akunin Shoki, or "evil doers whose faith is right." So too the modern catechism before quoted seems to favor the easier and less moralistic interpretation of Honen. It says: "When we pursue

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.



our daily duties and sharp practices, we help spread the way of Buddha and so even our lies and sharp practices become expressions of gratitude.”<sup>16</sup>

It seems hard to believe that religion can be made much easier than this. Japan's gods have been discarded by Amidists because they are too many and demand too many complex duties; Buddhist meditative technique and monastic disciplines are left far behind. There are neither distinctive moral standards required, nor intellectual demands made on the believer. Not only is salvation made easy—it is promised immediately; one may even now begin on the heavenly life by exercising “faith” in Amida Buddha. Thus it promises everything and asks nothing; perhaps that is why some sixteen million people espouse it.

### c. *Classical Christian Patterns of Faith and Love*

Faith and love are key words in Christianity as in other religions, perhaps even more so. Faith is a word about which many volumes have been written in Christendom, especially in its relation to reason. Frequently, therefore, it has been given the meaning of a specific intellectual content—a formal statement of the reasoned theological doctrines of Christianity. Hence we often speak of “the Christian faith” in the sense of a body of creedal declarations made during the centuries by various great church bodies. At other times it has been taken to signify the subjective attitude of belief in God or religious doctrine, and urged on believers somewhat in defiance of reason—or at least in the absence of complete rational proof. And still others have urged that faith should be thought of only as an effective turning of one's trust toward God—a kind of daring to trust God to the uttermost; or a capacity that is God's gift, that cannot be produced by any amount of effort on our part.

Love has been equally important to Christian thought and practice. “God is love” states the proposition very simply; and “this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son” (I John 4:10) further defines love as God's seeking of man. And if God is love seeking man through Christ, what does He require in turn but a responding love on man's part? If such love of God is genuine it will spread out to one's fellow men; for the love of men is the overflow of God's love to us, the natural and inevitable result of our love to Him.

Faith and love, then, work together as a team. Through faith one finds the reality of God; and the God Who is found by faith turns out to be the God Who loves man and can be loved by man in turn. When faith makes vital connection with the love of God, so that it fills the believer's heart and life, then it is “saving” faith; it saves because it brings God and man together in love. A

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 383.

faith that is only intellectual belief or mere human credulity is not in this sense a saving faith.

Though much more could be said—and has been said—about these two important Christian words, the above interpretation comes close to the basic emphasis given them by those Christian patterns of devotional religion we are about to study. Most of these patterns have not so much presented a new doctrine or urged practices radically divergent from those of orthodox Christians, as they have urged a greater warmth and conviction in believing the orthodox doctrine and carrying out the approved practice. Devotional movements are not essentially creators of new doctrine; and if they have sometimes created new organizations, it has been involuntarily rather than deliberately, because they found the organized church life of their time insufficiently expressive of the ardent faith and love they desired to achieve.

(1) *Francis of Assisi and John Wesley*

It is as classic exemplars of the Catholic and Protestant patterns of devotional religion that we consider St. Francis and Wesley—not because they are notably similar, in temperament, ideas, or careers; indeed, their *differences* in most of these areas are striking. Francis was an Italian Roman Catholic of the early 13th century who died in his early 40's. He was mild and unassuming, mystical and meditative; he shrank from public attention and the exercise of authority. Urged by others to form his unorganized followers into a regular Church order, he turned its practical conduct over to them as soon as possible. He was a man of slight education, but considerable native poetic talent. He lived and died happily in the bosom of the Church of his fathers.

John Wesley, on the other hand, was a product of 18th-century Protestant England. He was educated at Oxford University, and became an ordained clergyman in the Church of England. He found the answer to his personal religious searchings outside his own Church among the unorthodox Moravians. In attempting to communicate to his own Church their spirit of enthusiastic religious devotion, he was finally rejected by it; his large following among the working-classes of England became the Methodist Church, a brand new Protestant denomination. Wesley was prosaic in his literary expression, but an indefatigable and successful preacher and writer, an able organizer, and an iron disciplinarian. The different forms by which these two men expressed their inner religious life also suggest the fundamental differences of pattern in Catholic and Protestant devotion.

Yet the parallels are interesting, too. They are not those of a near identity of thought, feeling, or language, but rather of large-scale similarities in three areas: (1) initial conversion experiences from which their distinctive patterns of life



resulted; (2) roughly similar religious conditions under which they sought to interpret the Christian tradition, and live its life of faith and love; (3) a general similarity of attitude toward Church and tradition.

The life story of St. Francis is well known in main outline. Francesco Bernardone was the pleasure-loving son of a well-to-do merchant of the little North Italian town of Assisi. The leader of his fellows in fetes and escapades, he was captured along with many of them and imprisoned in Perugia after a defeat in one of the intertown skirmishes of the period. At first Francis took his captivity in good spirit; but the imprisonment experience of enforced idleness, plus sickness, changed him from the gay, irresponsible worldling to the serious religious seeker. He began to consider some sort of religious vocation, and gave himself to long periods of prayer and meditation. Some time later, his biographer Bonaventure tells us, there came to him an epochal experience:

One day, while he was praying thus apart through intensity of fervor wholly absorbed in God, the image of Christ Jesus crucified appeared to him. At this sight his soul was melted within him and the memory of the passion of Christ was so inwardly impressed upon the bowels of his heart that from that hour, whenever the crucifixion of Christ came into his mind, he could hardly refrain from breaking out into tears and groans.<sup>17</sup>

This was neither the first nor the last vision of St. Francis. Visions continued to be a regular part of his life; and so intense were his prayer periods and his ecstasies of devotion, that reasonably well-authenticated accounts tell us that the so-called stigmata (imprints of Christ's wounds on the cross in hands, feet, and side) appeared on Francis' own body. His devotions consumed many hours of his day, though he was attached to no regular monastic order; and this new-found meditative life was the spring of all his action. His "conversion" experience was different from his other visionary experiences only in being one of the first of them, and in having fused his spiritual yearnings into the energy of action. Taking Lady Poverty as his bride, Francis set forth to minister to the sick and outcast members of medieval society.

It would be quite possible to consider Francis as a Christian mystic rather than a devotionalist—as many have done. Some, indeed, would call him one of the few authentic Christian mystics, who, out of the genuine resources of the Christian faith, and apart from the imported elements of Greek and oriental mysticisms, produced an intense and pure mysticism of love; this resulted—in true Christian fashion—in a pattern of devoted service to his fellow men. Whether this is a more truly Christian type of mysticism than those we shall examine later, we shall not here try to decide; but for some of these same rea-

<sup>17</sup> Gamaliel Bradford, *Saints and Sinners*, Houghton Mifflin, 1932, p. 58.

sons we have called him a devotionalist. For Francis, like Ramakrishna, was emotionalist rather than intellectualist in his approach to mysticism; he became mystical somewhat incidentally—as a by-product of his emotion. He lacked all that self-critical and systematic quality we shall find in the “professional” mystics; his visions were not the result of elaborate techniques, but the incandescence of an emotion that had been intensively but rather instinctively centered on certain themes. And thus he is a typical product of Catholic Christian devotion, intenser than most in his devotional life, but not so far removed from his fellows as to be different in kind; his is a true, though exceptional, expression of the strong emotional fervor nourished in many unexpected places in the Catholic structure.

John Wesley’s quality and pitch of devotion never led him to any such vivid experiences as those of Francis. Though he was all his days a devout prayerer and reader of the Bible, we hear of no visions in the many pages of his journals. He might be aware of divine leadings, might attribute to providential care the passing of a cloud over the face of the hot sun during an outdoor meeting, or a narrow escape from a rowdy mob; but he never tells us of actual voices speaking to him, nor of the imprint of any sacred marks on his flesh, even after the most ardent prayers. Probably such manifestations would have scandalized his good Protestant conscience.

But John Wesley, as well as Francis, had his definitive spiritual experience; and it too came after a period of personal searching—more prolonged if not as intense. And this experience gave to Wesley’s career and the Church he founded their distinctive character. Born in an Established Church clergyman’s home, one of the youngest of 18 children, John was thoroughly instructed in the tenets of English Protestantism by his energetic mother, Susanna Wesley. It was not therefore unnatural that he and his brother Charles should set out for Oxford University to prepare themselves for that ministry. Nor was it perhaps unexpected that they should serious-mindedly form a university “cell-group” for prayer and systematic examination of their religious progress. This group was nicknamed the “Holy Club,” and the systematic fashion in which the Wesley group went about its practice of religion brought the further nickname of “Methodist”—later applied to the denomination. Up to this point John Wesley was a good proponent of the way of works, and something of its matter-of-factness never deserted him.

In due course of time John and Charles Wesley were ordained as clergymen in the Church of England (Anglican), and might well have ended their days following that sacramental pattern of salvation, had it not been for two factors: one was a gnawing sense of dissatisfaction in Wesley himself over the results of his religious strivings. Why did the daily course of prayers and good deeds not



bring him peace and joy, but only a haunted carefulness? And the other was his contact with the Moravians, an enthusiastic, evangelical group of pietists from the continent. It was on shipboard that he met them, where he was taking passage to North America as a missionary to Georgia. In the midst of a fearful storm at sea he observed their humility, their charity, and their calmness. In his journal (February 7, 1736) he reports a later conversation with one of them:

He [the Moravian] said, "My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God?" I was surprised and knew not what to answer. He observed it, and asked, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" I paused, and said, "I know that He is the Saviour of the world." "True," replied he; "but do you know He has saved you?" . . . I said, "I do," but I fear they were vain words.<sup>18</sup>

Two years later, on his return to England, he wrote under the date of February 24, 1738: "I went to America, to convert the Indians; but oh! who shall convert me? who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief?"<sup>19</sup>

Back in England he continued his disturbing association with the Moravians, though rather like one taking bad-tasting medicine. Then on May 14 of that same year he wrote in his journal:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society [Moravian] in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, and saved me from the law of sin and death.<sup>20</sup>

There were a few subsequent ups and downs of assurance, but those words "I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation" mark Wesley's transformation from a man diligently seeking salvation by works to one who achieved it by faith—that is, through trust. From now on Wesley is a heart-warmed man of faith and love, anxious to communicate to others his new-found experience. His call to service was not long in coming. After a brief visit to the Moravian colony on the continent during the summer, he came back to England again and in September wrote as follows:

I began again to declare in my own country the glad tidings of salvation, preaching three times. . . . On Monday I rejoiced to meet with our little society, which now consisted of thirty-two persons. The next day I went to the condemned felons,

<sup>18</sup> *John Wesley's Journal*, abridged, Jennings and Graham, n.d.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

in Newgate, and offered them free salvation. In the evening I went to a society in Bear Yard and preached repentance and remission of sins.<sup>21</sup>

A few days later he records that an opponent of his way confessed to him that he was a drunkard of long standing (or falling); after conversation and prayer the erstwhile opponent was converted.

This was only the beginning. For the next fifty years, winter and summer, cheerfully, determinedly, and systematically Wesley rode all over England proclaiming his free salvation. His gospel was simple: repent of your sins; believe in Christ as your saviour; and God will give you an inner joyful assurance of your salvation. This assurance is the sign and seal of that salvation, and does not depend on the performance of sacraments or zealous good works. It should be said, however, that Wesley was fully as zealous in methodically instructing his converts that their new-found faith must issue in sobriety, honesty, and good character in general, as he was in seeking their conversion; the fruit of godliness—if not its cause—was good works. Some have estimated that Wesley's revival among the miners and factory workers of England saved that land from a revolution such as occurred in 18th-century France. This may be an over-optimistic estimate; but it is certain that the Wesleyans exerted a tremendous influence on English society, both religiously and socially, in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Interestingly enough, when we turn again to St. Francis in the 13th century, we find him also concerned about those neglected by the Church and society of his time. His decision to give himself to some self-denying and compassionate life work came soon after his first visions, though the specific direction and techniques to be used were slower in developing. And his decision appeared to some persons in that self-satisfied era, both in Church officialdom and outside it, as foolish and as irregular as Wesley's preaching to crowds on the streets did to Anglicans five centuries later; Francis' father in particular opposed it. Though willing to indulge Francis' youthful frivolities at considerable cost, he beat him for giving some of the family goods to the Church, and took him to the bishop to complain about him and secure Church authority to back up his own. In one of his rare moments of angry passion Francis publicly stripped off every garment but a hair shirt, threw them at the feet of his father, and cried:

Peter Bernardone, until now I have called you my father; henceforth I can truly say, Our Father, who art in heaven; for He is my wealth and in Him do I place all my hope.<sup>22</sup>

Thus did Francis espouse himself to Lady Poverty and the service of her sub-

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, September 17, 1738.

<sup>22</sup> Maurice F. Egan, *Everybody's St. Francis*, Century, 1913, pp. 42 f.



jects. Now he was free as a bird, with no possessions but compassion, and no one but his needy fellow men to bind him to any place or duty. One of his first deeds was to rebuild a little fallen chapel. Frequently, as he journeyed in free-lance style over the country, he worked with his hands for a piece of bread or a night's lodging. Seeking to humble himself and express the compassion of Christ, he would greet the shunned leper as a brother, kissing him with affection, and bestowing on him his own garment. In turn he shunned the rich and companioned with the poor; none was too poor, too wretched, too outcast from society for Francis to attend and call brother or sister in Christ. Legend has it that he preached to the birds and animals; and we still sing his beautiful "Canticle to the Sun."

It was perhaps more the spirit of Francis than his actual deeds that made him notable in his own age and to ours. For that gaiety of spirit which had characterized him as a worldly youth, characterized him also as a mendicant friar, even though he often spoke of the wounds and sufferings of Christ. Freedom from possessions was to him not a sacrifice—but freedom from bondage. He was genuinely and contagiously happy in the company of humble people. And his vivid sense of the near presence of God shone through all his words and deeds.

It was not long before a small band of like-minded persons, oppressed as was Francis by the selfish wordliness of the times, gathered themselves around him; and these mendicant friars—neither monk nor priest, and without any Church standing—went about from place to place, devoting themselves to the service of whomsoever needed them. Within a few years the movement had gained sufficient momentum for Francis's friends to urge him to have it regularized by papal authority as a Church order. After some hesitation—both on the part of Francis and the Pope—this was accomplished in 1209, and the order was called that of the Lesser Friars or Little Brothers—since known as Franciscans. A companion order of nuns was soon formed under the leadership of a wealthy young woman who gave all her resources to the Church; it was named the Order of the Poor Clares.

But now that Francis was the head of an order, humble unworldly soul that he was, he did not know what to do with it; accordingly he turned over its administration to others, and continued to the end of his days his own life of devotion, prayer, and human service. He died in the company of some of his Little Brothers in the year 1226 at the age of 44.

One other common characteristic of Wesley and Francis should be emphasized again: they were not primarily creators of new doctrine, and only unwillingly of new organizations. They conceived themselves to be perfectly orthodox Christians, expressing only what was in the historic faith; for Wesley this was

to be found in the Bible and Church of England creed, and for Francis in Catholic tradition. In their own eyes they were not doing anything unusual or out of the way—only practicing more fervently, perhaps, what all Christians should do as a matter of course. Francis never made a doctrinal pronouncement, and Wesley took most of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Faith directly over from the Established Church into Methodism. Francis was in no sense a schismatic, but urged those who heard him to submit themselves in obedience to the priest, and in matters of religious belief to consult the bishop. Wesley maintained almost to the time of his death in his 88th year that he was a loyal Anglican, and would have taken all his followers into that communion had it been willing to receive him and them. Only because of practical necessity did he ordain his own local preachers and organize his followers into a church.

#### d. *Two Modern Christian Devotional Cults*

The contributions of St. Francis and Wesley have become permanent parts of Catholic and Protestant Christianity; their emphasis on a warmly devotional faith and loving human service as the natural expression of that faith, are continued in the Franciscan Orders and in the Methodist Church, respectively. Yet in becoming parts of the regular church structure the original impulses have been somewhat altered. These groups have taken on the cares and responsibilities of institutional life; outward concerns and administrative problems must engross their attention. One might say that precisely because the original devotional emphasis and emotional force have been harnessed to the duties required by institutional life, they bulk somewhat less largely in the total religious life of Francis' order and Wesley's Church today than their founders perhaps envisaged.

Now there are those in both Catholic and Protestant churches who desire a more pronounced emotional quality in their religious life than these modified patterns of devotionism can give; indeed, these modified Franciscan and Wesleyan patterns have been so regularized that they have become much like the very churches they originally set out to revive or to change. Hence there must needs be other expressions of the continued need for the emphatically emotional interpretation of religion.

Such expressions there are, in both modern Catholic and Protestant circles. In Catholicism, as we might expect, such special emphases have been given some formal ecclesiastical status, in the nature of semi-official cults or official orders. In this manner the Church gives house room within her structure to a considerable variety of religious expressions, but is also able to keep a supervisory eye on them. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is such a special interest cult (perhaps not quite achieving the status of an order), which has elicited among



Catholics wide popular interest, and been given a degree of official recognition. Its distinctive mark is a hyperemotional devotion to the symbolism of the Heart of Jesus; it focuses in itself all the latent sentimentality in Catholicism, of which there is considerable; hence it makes a first-class study of modern Catholic emotionalism.

In Protestantism the obvious—perhaps unavoidable—route for the self-realization of special interests is the *sect*. The dynamic leader and the new emphasis create for themselves a denomination that can specialize in their particular brand of religious goods; and so—not surprisingly—when Aimee Semple McPherson wished to jar the complacent middle-of-the-road Protestant and the indifferent unchurched man into an awareness of the Christian gospel by super-theatrical methods, she ended by creating a new church group. She called it the “Four-Square Gospel Church,” and it is an expression of the most intense kind of Protestant emotionalism. As such it will serve for our example of a modern Protestant development in this area.

### (1) *The Cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

Protestants are aware of the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus mostly in the form of religious *objets d'art*, like calendars and pictures on the walls of Catholic homes, which portray the haloed Jesus holding his haloed heart in his hand or exposing it to view in his opened bosom. The heart is usually shaped like a physical human heart, garlanded with a wreath of thorns (sometimes of thorns and flowers mingled), and topped by a flaming fire; out of this flame there often rises a cross.

This is but one small and exterior part of the cult, however. It is of ancient origin, and today contains one order each of priests and nuns, several associations like “The Priests’ Universal Union of the Friends of the Sacred Heart,” congregations devoted specially to the worship of the Sacred Heart, plus a considerable ritual and literature. Though not yet a major order like the Franciscans, the movement is at least of considerable proportions, and probably exerts an influence rather widely outside its membership.

The history of the cult goes back to St. Francis’ 13th century. St. Gertrude (1256–1301) was a Benedictine nun of Helfta in Saxony. Entering the convent at the age of three, she spent a devout childhood, and joined the order as a young girl. In her 26th year she began to see mystical visions. The epochal one occurred during a celebration of the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, and is described in the following words:

Her historian relates that the Beloved Disciple, St. John, appeared to her on one occasion, and that she asked her heavenly Visitor how it was that he, whose head had reposed on the breast of the Saviour at the Last Supper, kept complete silence

about the throbbing of the adorable Heart of his Master; and she expressed regret to him that he had said nothing about it for our instruction. The Saint replied to her: My mission was to write for the Church, still in its infancy. . . . As for the language of these blessed beats of the Heart of Jesus, it is reserved for the last ages when the world . . . become cold in the love of God, will need to be warmed again by the revelation of these mysteries.<sup>23</sup>

The light of these revelations was kept under a bushel, so to speak, by the contemporary ecclesiastical authorities. For the next three centuries the cult was of a private, individual sort, passed on from person to person by word of mouth and some few writings. Interest in the theme of the heart of Jesus was kept alive indirectly, at least, by the emphasis of the Franciscans on the wounds of Jesus; and the symbols of the cult were used widely by the Jesuits on their books and chapel walls. In the 16th century the Church officially recognized the Heart of Jesus as an object worthy of religious devotion.

The second important figure in the cult history—and perhaps the person who contributed most to the cult's present stature in the church—was also a woman, Margaret Mary Alacoque, a French nun at Parlay le Monial, who lived from 1647 to 1690. She was indoctrinated in devotion to the Heart by her instructress, Mother Metchilde, who has left us an account of her (Metchilde's) visions.

One day I saw the Son of God, holding in His Hand His own Heart, Which appeared more brilliant than the sun and Which was casting rays of light on every side; then, this amiable Saviour gave me to understand that all the graces which God unceasingly pours forth on men according to the capacity of each, come from the plenitude of this divine Heart.<sup>24</sup>

Mother Metchilde was later instructed by vision to tell Margaret Mary that she was to seek in this Heart everything she needed. Not too much later Margaret Mary had her visions of the Heart.

On the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, having received from my divine Saviour a favor almost similar to that which this Beloved Disciple received on the evening of the Last Supper, the Divine Heart was represented to me as a throne all of fire with flames radiating its light on every side.

It appeared more brilliant than the sun, and transparent like crystal. The wound which He received on the Cross appeared clearly. There was a crown of thorns around the Sacred Heart and it was surmounted by a cross.

He then gave me to understand that the great desire which He had of being perfectly loved by men had caused Him to form this design of manifesting to them

<sup>23</sup> Reverend John Croiset, S.J., *The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ*, Newman Press, p. 72.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.



His Heart and of opening to them all the treasures of love, mercy, grace, sanctification and salvation which it contains . . . ; and He assured me that He takes a singular pleasure in being honored under the figure of this Heart of flesh, the image of which He wished to be exposed in public, in order, He added, to touch the unfeeling hearts of men.<sup>25</sup>

Further visions instructed Margaret Mary in other matters. She was to receive communion more frequently than ordinary, on the first Friday of each month; she would feel the pains of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane on Thursday and Friday nights, and must then pray from eleven till midnight "prostrated with your face on the ground in order to appease My anger by asking pardon for sinners, and to alleviate in some measure the bitter sorrow which I felt on seeing Myself abandoned by My apostles." (This highly irregular request for special privileges was allowed only when a miracle of healing by Margaret Mary demonstrated the divine quality of these visions.) Christ further represented himself to her as having "an ardent thirst to be honored and loved by men in the Most Blessed Sacrament,"<sup>26</sup> and finding almost no one who quenched that thirst by making loving response.

The form of the cult was now taking shape. It would obviously major in a quality of strongly emotional attachment to the symbolism of the Sacred Heart; it would be fitted profitably into the sacramental structure of the Church, centering its attention on the Eucharist in the Mass as containing the fullness of the presence of Christ. And though having its origin in mystical experiences, it would be open to all—priest and layman alike—through the gateway of devotion. Margaret Mary, indeed, received a vision specially emphasizing this latter point:

"Publish this devotion everywhere," said this amiable Saviour, "propagate it, recommend it to people of the world as a sure and easy means to obtain from Me a true love of God; to Ecclesiastics and Religious, as an efficacious means to arrive at the perfection of their state; to those who work for the salvation of their neighbor, as an assured means to touch the most hardened hearts; and finally, to all the most faithful, as a most solid devotion, and one most proper to obtain victory over the strongest passions. . . ." <sup>27</sup>

With all these excellent recommendations it would seem that the cult would soon have made its way throughout the Catholic world; and indeed it finally did—but only after difficulties. Margaret Mary was loath to speak of her revelations, but finally did so to one or two trusted advisers. After some persuasion she wrote them down, and Father Croiset, a Jesuit, wrote a book containing

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36 f.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

her revelations and sundry prescriptions for devotional exercises; it was published a year before her death in 1690. The book was popular, but was on the *Index* of books forbidden by the Pope for Catholic reading from 1704 till 1887.

Meantime the movement made forward strides—owing to the popularity of its devotional emphasis rather than the enthusiasm of the official Church. The papacy, in fact, seemed reluctant to recognize the cult in any way. After two refusals—in 1697 and again in 1729—a special Feast of the Sacred Heart was at last allowed in 1765; the Jesuits were placed in general charge of the Feast and the movement. In 1855 a shrine to “Our Lady of the Sacred Heart” was erected; a prayer association, formed in 1864, grew into the Confraternity of our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and was granted papal blessing; in 1887 Margaret Mary’s revelations were removed from the *Index*; and in 1889 the rites of the Sacred Heart were made a double rite of the first class. Congregations were allowed to consecrate themselves to it; and in 1899 Leo XIII consecrated “all mankind” to the Sacred Heart.

The actual formation of priestly orders devoted to the service of the Sacred Heart is the work of still a third nun. Mother Louise Margaret de la Touche (1868–1915) grew up in a Catholic family who were regular at Mass (she tells us), but for whom God was “only a just Master Whom we must serve strictly, respect for His greatness, and leave alone in the heights of heaven in the midst of His Angels and Saints.”<sup>28</sup> But such a relationship did not satisfy Mother de la Touche; even as a child she had sought a more personal relationship to God. While visiting the shrine commemorating Margaret Mary Alacoque’s visions at Parlay le Monial, she vowed perpetual obedience to the Sacred Heart, and in 1890 entered a convent.

In her *Book of Infinite Love* she tells of the visions that came to her, and gave her a special vocation with regard to the Heart. On one June 7 Jesus appeared to her and said: “Margaret Mary has shown My Heart to the world, do you show it to My priests.”<sup>29</sup> And in a further vision she saw all the priests drawn up in a body about the Sacred Heart. So she set herself to form a special order of priests and nuns devoted to the reverence of the Heart and to its service in missionary activity; in the end she was successful.

Mother de la Touche was persuaded that increased reverence for the Sacred Heart would solve all the Church’s problems. In one of her visions Jesus exhorts the priests to

Come to the source of love; when they have drunk in large draughts from it,

<sup>28</sup> Mother Louise Margaret Claret de la Touche, *The Book of Infinite Love*, Newman Press, 1948 ed., p. xiii.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xvi.



they will renew the world. I will make those who come to My Heart pure and strong. . . . I will give them a new power over souls.<sup>30</sup>

If all priests were bound together in the infinite love of the Heart of Jesus, their complex lives would be simplified, the cool love of many of them made to flame, and heresy would be resoundingly defeated.

There is a rather lush emotionalism in Mother de la Touche—and indeed in the whole movement—which will no doubt repel most Protestants. Christ is a “Love-Saviour”; one should go to the sacrament because he is “thirsty for union with this Heart, so tender and so ardent”; he should “prostrate” himself before it, “adore” the Host, go to the holy table with “ardent avidity,” and lovingly kiss the consecrated paten on which the divine Host reposes each day.<sup>31</sup> Mother de la Touche feels a “passionate desire to make God loved”; so passionate is this desire that it is like “surging waves,” which both burn like fire and refresh “like limpid water.”<sup>32</sup> And in the following graphic passage she describes Christ’s yearning over the priesthood:

Jesus, my sweet Mercy, I would wish to be able to write what Thou dost never cease to put before the eyes of my soul: Thy priests! . . . Oh! how Thou lovest them! And Thou callest them to Thee with such sweet words, with such touching complaints! I seem to see Thee like a tender lamb, wounded by the malice of men and moaning gently to call those who can comfort and heal it. Thou hast thirst for love, Thou hast thirst for souls and Thou stretchest Thy parched lips toward those who can quench Thy thirst . . . Thy priests.<sup>33</sup>

Such sentimental emotionalism, though somewhat extreme, is not entirely foreign to Catholic tradition; its medieval pattern of saintly devotion, both male and female, had many themes lending themselves to such treatment. The Song of Solomon was used rather widely in monastic life as a canticle of divine love, and many a nun reveled in the thought of being the Bride of Christ; so also the cults of the veneration of Mary and the saints lend themselves to a rather sentimentalized treatment of religious faith. (Indeed there is even a cult of the Heart of Mary—a kind of vestibule cult to that of the Heart of Jesus.) Perhaps this emotional softness within is Catholicism’s compensation for some of its hard official character without.

What will be the destiny of this latest apostle of the Sacred Heart, Mother de la Touche? This has not yet been fully decided by her Church. Some of her projects have been sanctioned, her works given churchly approval, and received the special blessing of several popes, though they have not yet been pronounced

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85 f.

authentic revelations. Several reports of miracles due to her intercessions have been made, and more will no doubt occur. Mother de la Touche is probably at the beginning of the road both to beatification and ultimate canonization as a saint.

Whatever our evaluation of Catholic emotionalism, the Church handles it on the whole very well. It is able to weave the emotional fervor such movements generate directly into its sacramental structure. A small leaflet from official Catholic sources promises those priests who use a Sacred Heart prayer printed thereon: "Indulgences: 300 days once a day. A plenary indulgence on usual conditions, if recited daily for a month. (Pius X, Rescript in his own hand March 3, 1905. Raccolta 1937)." Thus the kind of deviationism that in Protestantism might form another sect is here kept within the fold and used to undergird the strength of ecclesiastical authority.

## (2) *Protestant Revivalism and the Four-Square Gospel*

Modern Protestantism has its extreme emotional manifestations, just as does Catholicism, but in characteristically different form: the revival meeting and the revivalist sect. The revival meeting, which has been especially prevalent in American Protestantism, is a special kind of religious service in which high emotionalism is deliberately cultivated, usually through impassioned preaching, singing, and praying. Its goals are the renewal of the spiritual lives of faithful Christians, and more especially the conversion of sinners.

We should observe, to begin with, that revivalism is inherent in Protestantism; for Protestantism has placed its major emphasis on public preaching as a means of spiritual renewal and of the evangelism of the masses. It is in the sermon that the usual Protestant ritual finds its center; it has been the great preachers of Protestantism who have given it its major impulses; and preaching is still the preferred means by which the lukewarm and the unrepentant are to be stirred to spiritual concern. In the absence of any massive ritual observance, all the emotional force of Protestantism has tended to center in the sermon, which, as a persuasive one-sided conversation or rousing appeal, seeks for an immediate emotional response; indeed, the success of preaching is usually judged by such immediate responses. Thus arises the revival meeting.

Revivalism is a special adaptation of the preaching-centered service of worship; its central purpose is to induce the listener to act and to make on the spot a permanently binding religious decision. "Accept Christ as your Saviour, *now*," is the core of its message; it seeks to induce those present to turn from their non-Christian deeds, their lack of faith, and be converted. Hence, in trying to secure the maximum persuasive power, the revivalist preacher enhances as much as possible the emotionalism of the scene. Primarily he tries to do it by the con-



centrated force of his preaching—by the serious themes chosen, such as the judgment of God on sin, the terrors of hell, and by his urgent tone and impressive manner of speaking. Other aids are group singing, to bring the congregation into an emotional unity and help persuade the undecided to make a decision; the giving of testimonies by those already saved; and—in the case of Aimee Semple McPherson—unbelievably sensational theatrical effects.

But though revivalism may be always implied in the Protestant pattern of worship, as a specific technique its history is somewhat more limited; perhaps we might say that the Wesleyan meetings in 18th-century England were the first large-scale modern revivals—though by no means the first example of “revivalistic” preaching. The Wesleyan meetings sought to persuade men to repent and believe, and promised them a heart-warming assurance of salvation within. The Wesleys, and George Whitefield, who assisted them, emphasized “preaching for decisions,” and got many of them on the spot. There were those who at the close of a Wesleyan service of gospel hymns and persuasive gospel preaching broke into cries of sorrow for sin or rejoiced audibly in their salvation. Wesley was at first suspicious of such manifestations; but when they occurred under his own preaching he perforce acknowledged them as the work of God. It should be said that he tried to keep such manifestations under control and never sought sensationalism for its own sake. Yet it can likewise be seen why such an enthusiastic style of meeting was not welcomed in the high church Anglican cathedrals of the realm.

It was the English colonies in North America that provided what was to prove the most fertile ground for revivalism. Some of this American revivalism was a direct product of the Wesleyan movement. George Whitefield preached on both sides of the Atlantic to eager audiences; and many Methodist preachers carried his pattern of evangelism throughout the circuits of the expanding frontier in the days after the Revolution. But there were other sources as well; in fact, it was New England Congregationalism under Jonathan Edwards that sparked the revivalistic Great Awakening of the 1730's that swept through the colonies, affecting Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and even some Church of England congregations; Methodism, then, only added fuel to an already burning flame.

Other waves of revivalism followed. The Second Great Awakening came to the young nation in the early 1800's, running like a grass fire through the frontier regions of Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Indiana. The camp-meeting—a large outdoor revival meeting in the woods, with hundreds, even thousands, attending for a week or more—came into its heyday. Several preachers might be holding forth at the same time in different clearings, but the pattern was the same in all: vigorously persuasive preaching, and sudden conversions, with many strange and violent symptoms. “Convicted” sinners often got

the "jerks"—spasmodic twitchings of the head or the whole body—which would not stop until they made their peace with God by repentance and prayer. By such rough, crude means the rough, crude frontier was evangelized with the Christian gospel by the Baptists and Presbyterians, but especially by the Methodists, who borrowed the camp-meeting from the Presbyterians and made it their distinctive instrument of evangelism. It still endures in somewhat less crude style in some parts of the country.

To these waves of revivalism a number of modern Protestant denominations owe their origin. It was the Second Great Awakening, for instance, that gave birth to the Cumberland Presbyterians and the Disciples or Christians in Kentucky, the Methodist Protestants in Maryland, and the United Brethren and the Evangelicals in Pennsylvania; other denominations owe much of their present size to their aggressive revivalism during this formative period in American life—notably the Baptists and Methodists. And still others—like the Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Episcopalians—did not grow correspondingly, largely because they did not participate at all, or only limitedly, in frontier revivalism.

Probably revivalism is in the American Protestant's blood stream. For though frontier days have passed, and with them frontier style revivals, the revivalist and the revival meeting have gone on. Since that time there have been notable revivalists like Charles G. Finney, Dwight L. Moody, Billy Sunday, and Billy Graham—to mention only a few; they have drawn large crowds, and undoubtedly turned many to the churches. Nor should we forget that in a considerable section of the South and parts of the West and Midwest the revival meeting is still a going concern.

Yet for the large majority of Protestant churches revivalism is a thing of the past; these churches turn to religious education and home training for the maintenance of their church memberships. They have, on the whole, no technique for evangelizing those who are outside their constituencies, save perhaps by friendly invitations to "come to church with us." Revivalism has been largely turned over to the free-lance specialist, who sets up his tent on the circus lot in town, engages the auditorium or theater for special services, or else, in the manner of the Salvation Army, tries street-corner evangelism; or still further—by main-line church default—it has become the nearly exclusive property of the small and peculiar sect that specializes in a regular program of sensational evangelism in the hope of attracting the unchurched throngs (untouched by main-liners' decorous religion), or the emotionally starved members of those same churches.

Such special treatment of evangelism by the sometimes eccentric specialists has produced some sensational results in revivalism; the old patterns have been given rare new twists, still further increasing the feeling of aversion to them in



the more regular church bodies. And of all these rare new twists none has been rarer, perhaps, than that of Aimee Semple McPherson's Four-Square Gospel; her brand of revivalism was the old revival pattern modernized by the Hollywood treatment. Its emotionalism was exploited on a grandiose scale by all the devices known to modern stagecraft and with all the skill of a born actress. Nothing was too splendid, too sensational, too colossal to attempt. Under Sister Aimee's management the intense but painfully bare revival service held in a tent, auditorium, or gospel hall, became a grandiose, breath-taking spectacle of light, sound, and drama, carried on in a vast and splendid tabernacle, each time in a crashingly different way; she made the merely great and stirring into the supercolossal and cataclysmic.

Sister Aimee's beginnings were humble. In the midst of a nondescript girlhood she was converted and "baptized by the Spirit" under the preaching of Robert Semple, a traveling evangelist. She finally married him, and the couple went to China as missionaries, where Robert died within the year. Aimee returned to the states to bear his child, and then set forth on her own barnstorming evangelistic tour, equipped only with an old car, a tent, and her Bible. In Florida she met Harold McPherson, a grocer, whom she married, and with whom she settled down to live. But shortly Aimee heard the call to take to preaching again. Healed from a nervous breakdown when she finally yielded to the call, she separated from her husband and took off to California on a "transcontinental gospel auto tour." She arrived in Los Angeles in 1920.

Los Angeles was never quite the same after Sister Aimee arrived—she insisted that everyone call her "Sister." Her dramatic revivalism made an impression even in spectacle-ridden California. When Sister preached a sermon entitled "The Green Light Is On," she began it by roaring down the center aisle on a motorcycle, slamming on the brakes to the screech of a policeman's whistle, and shouting, "Stop! You're speeding to hell!" On another Sunday she was dressed in a football outfit, and carried the ball of the Four-Square Gospel for a touchdown while Jesus ran interference. On another occasion she had a merry-go-round on the stage of Angelus Temple, and proclaimed dramatically to the crowd that the merry-go-round of civilization was breaking down; only Jesus and Aimee could prevent the breakdown.<sup>34</sup>

California took Aimee to its heart, for Aimee always had a new spectacle to present; one never knew what Sister would do or say next. Crowds flocked to her meetings by the thousands, till huge Angelus Temple, complete with choirs, organs, kitchens, and radio station, was built to accommodate and serve them. Money flowed in from free-will offerings—sometimes by ways as extraordinary

<sup>34</sup> Marcus Bach, *They Have Found a Faith*, copyright, 1946, used by special permission of the publishers, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., pp. 59 f.

as being pinned by the congregation to "clothes lines" running through the auditorium and pulled in by the evangelist. Through it all moved Sister Aimee, tall and handsome, and with the sure instinct of a consummately skillful actress, clasping her white Bible to her breast and dramatically calling men and women to accept Jesus in the "Four-Square way"—as Saviour, Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, Healer, and Coming King.

Such unusual appeals produced unusual results. Let a witness describe how one man was "baptized with the Holy Spirit" at Angelus Temple:

Once at a "Holy Ghost meeting" I saw a well-dressed, businesslike man "receive the Spirit." He was sitting just a few seats from me. Suddenly violent trembling seized him. His muscles contracted. He flung his hands into the air, crying, "God! God!" His convulsed shouting reached Sister, who stood on the platform in her white gown, Bible in hand.

"That's right, brother!" she called. "It *is* God! You can depend on that". . .

At the sound of her voice, the man's body shook as though he had touched a live wire. He rose to his feet. "Glory!" he shouted. "Glory!" His hands fluttered high in the air. He cried, unabated, . . . Some of the worshipers laughed aloud as the man started his groping, trance-like movement toward the aisle. . . . Temple workers tried to assist the man, but he shook them off. . . . In a rhythmic, abandoned sort of way he turned his head to the right and left and cried, "Glory! Wonderful! Jesus!"

Then with swift suddenness he began "speaking in tongues" an ecstatic rap-turous chatter. . . . To the believing it is heaven's language, the evidence of the Holy Ghost baptism. An awed hush gripped the congregation. Then Sister took on the role of interpreter, translating the musical chant into English. . . . Exclamations of praise and wonder broke from the listeners when the man finally sank to the floor at the evangelist's feet and lay still.<sup>35</sup>

For more than twenty years Sister kept on shocking shock-proof Los Angeles in one way or another, and scandalizing conventional religion and religionists in every possible way. She had several dramatic bouts with the devil which would have put any ordinary minister of the gospel out of business—a lawsuit brought by her mother, a brief third marriage and divorce, and a dubious kidnapping (or was it a love-nest rendezvous?). Epithets like "sensational," "cheap," "sacrilegious"—to use only the politer ones—were flung at her by the city's ministers. Yet she turned everything to her advantage. Angelus Temple was paid for with \$1,500,000 from offerings, a radio station was added, a training school for Four-square ministers was set up, a large volume of literature was published, an immense welfare program was carried on, and numerous branch churches were founded in the United States and foreign countries.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79 f.



When her hour of departure from this life came in 1944, Sister passed on in the same grand style in which she had lived; she would have loved the glory of it all—that funeral they gave her. More than five thousand people were present in Angelus Temple for the occasion:

The great organ was playing. Someone near me whispered, "It's a song *she* wrote. Sister. It's 'Why Are They Whipping My Jesus?'" Around me people touched handkerchiefs to their eyes. The hundred choir members gripped their hymnals. In typical Four-square fashion they sat in a V-shape, flanking an improvised grotto. Above it was a gigantic cross and corpus with the three Marys, lonely and forsaken, standing nearby. Within the cavernous grotto opening I could see a huge ansate cross of fresh-cut roses, perhaps thirty feet high. Touching this was a shield of white roses on which red roses spelled *Our Commander*. An open Bible of white carnations—floral gates ajar, large enough for a person to walk through—a vacant chair of white asters—a clock of flowers pointing to 11:15—a globe of white chrysanthemums—horseshoes, wheels, anchors, hearts, harps, a replica of the Four-square Temple, carpets, flags, lighthouses—all of flowers—a hundred thousand dollars' worth of flowers. . . . Yet neither the beauty nor the fragrance of this memorial pageantry—nor the policeman standing at subdued attention—nor the orchestra in its pit—could for long lure my gaze from the impressive open casket where Sister lay.<sup>36</sup>

Thus did Sister—possibly the most sensational evangelist Protestantism has ever known, perhaps the most flamboyant representative of the Way of Devotion the world ever saw—live and die. Her work goes on—whether permanently or not, who can say. Services of great evangelistic fervor, though lacking Aimee's touch, continue in her Temple and in the "Lighthouses" (branch churches) throughout America and elsewhere. There are conversions, healings, and baptisms with the Spirit, as under the ministry of Sister. There are at least 400 churches and 20,000 members, besides many other thousands who have been influenced by Four-square. Perhaps in time it will become another somewhat staid Protestant denomination. And then doubtless some other group will rise up to challenge new generations of Americans with new forms of revivalism.

### 3. *Critical Summary*

At the beginning of our study of the way of devotion we observed that it was not as clear-cut and distinctive a way of salvation as the other two. It has not produced the codes of conduct, the clear-cut theological statements, and the institutions, which we found in the way of works. It has not produced the same definite technique or method of salvation we shall observe in mysticism. It has

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

been rather uneven in its career in religion; it suggests a tide in the history of religion that has ebbed and flowed from one generation to another.

The reason for this unevenness of course and indistinctness of character in the expressions of devotionism is that when we discuss this way of salvation we are really dealing with the history of emotion in religion; and emotion is unstable rather than steady, permeative of already established institutions and beliefs rather than constructive of them.

The presence of emotion in religion—even strong emotion—should not surprise us, however. Early in our study we observed the peculiar tenacity with which religious people hold their beliefs and follow their religious customs, because they are emotionally attached to them. In fact, there is probably no other area in human life where emotion runs as deep. But far from being strange or irrational, this is inevitable; for religion deals with the most basic human concerns and interests, humanity's deepest fears and hopes; we might almost define it as that which consistently arouses, in the individual or group, the most intense and enduring emotion.

Yet, rather curiously, the history of the development of religion is also the history of the lessening—or at least the specializing—of the role of emotion in religion. In primitive cultures emotion is rather easily and naturally expressed; the economic, the social, the personal, the religious, and the esthetic intermingle so closely in the basic pattern of life that emotion attaches equally to them all. And the ritual patterns of primitive society give effective release to any emotional tensions that may be built up, left over, or denied expression in ordinary daily activities. But as civilization develops, emotion becomes less easily expressed; it becomes compartmentalized into distinctive types, or is centered in many separate interests.

Now religion also becomes increasingly specialized along with the rest of culture, and as a distinctive center of human thought and action becomes a separate center of emotion. It is not so much that it focuses a special set of "religious" emotions within it, as that it gives them a special quality of intensity. The area of religion includes those interests that affect man most deeply; and as they become more clearly defined, so is the emotion gathering around them further intensified. The religious area becomes supercharged emotionally; it sucks the emotional force out of other areas of life and concentrates it within itself. Its symbols and rituals come to bear almost the whole weight of the emotional expression denied to man by the rest of his increasingly complex culture, and to serve as the release mechanism for the emotional tensions his specialized life builds up in him.

But at the same time something else often happens. As the religious emotional expression becomes more specialized—and perhaps intensified—it may at



the same time grow thinner inwardly. Religion's cultural and ethical progress inhibits it from some of its former expressions; the crude, the raw, the bloody, the immoral, are either eliminated or given more refined expression through symbol; they are shifted out of the range of religious devotion; certain emotions are not to be called forth in the worship of deity, but rather repressed. Such, at least, has been the history of highly moralized religions. And while this raises the moral tone of a religion, and is no doubt desirable, it also increases man's emotional problems. Religious expression can no longer serve him adequately for a *total* emotional release; indeed, it may even become for him an area of emotional tightness and inhibition; religion becomes emotionally anemic, and men must seek release through other channels.

It is this emotional anemia in organized and orthodox religion against which the devotionalists have uniformly protested. They have found—each in his own particular context—that the religion of their time no longer called forth deep and moving human emotion; that the area of life that should most naturally give rise to the most profound human emotional expression was in fact leaving men cold. Religion had become dead, mechanical, formal; it was failing to do for men the very thing it was intended to do best. Therefore the devotionalist—instinctively rather than deliberately, as a rule—has sought to reanimate the apparently lifeless corpus of religious doctrine, ritual, and institution with the living breath of emotional fervor.

Because the way of devotion is also the way of emotion, it is subject to the weaknesses of human emotional life. There is, for example, the unevenness of the emotional level. Emotion is not a steady quantity or certain quality; it varies in intensity from high excitement to near zero—perhaps within a short time—and rapidly changes from joy to terror or from laughter to tears. Those who vary too rapidly or excessively for no apparent reason are of course mentally ill; yet even the "normal" person is subject to such emotional fluctuations.

Now when religion is attached too directly to the emotional flow it will experience pronounced ups and downs. At one moment the believer will be full of religious exaltation; a little later he has, for no apparent reason, lost the joy of the Lord or his assurance of salvation. In one mood the kingdom of heaven seems about to come to earth; in another, earth and hell are scarcely distinguishable. The highly emotional convert may have mistaken the arousal of violent but temporary emotion as a fundamental change of character, and soon becomes a "backslider." Indeed, this is somewhat the history of revivalism: dizzy heights of expectation and strong emotional tides, followed by periods of dullness and irreligion; it was only a very few years after Jonathan Edwards had sparked the Great Awakening that he complained of the spiritual deadness and unconcern of New England.

The devotionalist interpretation of religion tends to accentuate the natural emotional rhythm to a truly dizzy pace, and turn legitimate religious emotion into emotionalism. As a protestant against formalism in religion the follower of the way of devotion becomes extreme in his reaction—avid in his desire for more emotion. By conceiving strong emotional stirrings to be the only authentic mark of the moving of the Divine Spirit in men's lives, he creates the necessity for ever-increasing doses of emotional excitement. For emotional excitement is like drug addiction: the more it is used the more it is wanted. And so the sentimentality of a Heart of Jesus cult or the deliberate sensationalism of a Four-square Gospel sect arises—emotion is now cultivated as a supreme good in itself.

The way of devotion is also weak on another count: it may easily substitute feeling for deed; it is peculiarly tempted here. Now the natural outlet for an emotional pressure—and religion builds up as well as releases pressures—is in action; emotion will move men to action where cold logic will not. But when action is blocked for the time—as it partly is in worship—one of two things may happen: either the bottled-up emotion creates dangerous tensions within the individual, which may explode at unpredictable places (religious fanaticism), or else the emotion is taken for the deed and dissipates itself in feeling (religious emotionalism). Thus, when worship is not easily or directly translatable into action, the emotions it arouses may easily evaporate inside religion itself; or produce a kind of hypocrisy that uses the words of religion but does not essentially alter the worshiper's behavior.

Whether religious emotion issues in action or not will often depend on its context of religious idea or personal character. Hindu bhakti-emotion flowers luxuriantly and unconcernedly on the ramparts of caste structure and human misery, because the things of this world are not ultimately important to the individual who is salvation-bent; in the end its implicit democracy may help break down those walls—but not its direct action. Amida Buddhism, as we have seen, is faith without works, and looks tolerantly on "lies and sharp practices," depending on the Japanese mode of life for its moral standards. John Wesley and St. Francis were practical doers of good because of the strong Christian tradition of practical works of mercy growing directly from the life and teachings of Christ. But even in Christianity emotional fervor may grow side by side with the utmost social conservatism, and by means of Bible passages sanction institutions like negro slavery; it may siphon all the creative energies of its converts into a narrow concern with individual salvation, as it has indeed done in these last two cases.

The final failure with which we shall charge the way of devotion is its uncritical laxness. Sometimes it is anti-intellectual. Ramakrishna, for instance, was more concerned about the intensity of one's devotion than about the object of



that devotion; for him quantity of devotion was everything, quality was relatively unimportant. And even when it is not *anti*-intellectual, it is, as we have observed, *non*intellectual; it does not create doctrines, but only chooses among those that others have created. And on the other hand a persistent scent of moral laxness, growing out of its emphasis on unrestrained emotional expression, has always clung to its skirts. Devotionalism is often hard put to it to distinguish divine love from human lust; thus the temple prostitute is an accepted institution among some of the bhaktas of Hinduism; and Rasputin, Russian monk extraordinary of Czarist days, raped the women who came to see him, as a sacramental expression of his cult of divine love. These are perhaps extremes, for much religious emotionalism is rigorously moral; yet by its very nature it is prone to irregularities.

Despite its occasional excesses and its inherent weaknesses, the way of devotion must not be lost to religion—if religion values its health. *The truth enshrined in the way of devotion is this: in religion the heart as well as the head has its essential place*; the motivation to religious deed is equally important with the deed itself. Indeed, when emotionalism runs rampant within a faith or takes many members from one group to another, then that faith or group that is losing its members should examine itself; no doubt it is seriously neglecting the interests of the heart. For there is a kind of justifiable pragmatism among people who look hopefully at religion; they say to a scripture, a leader, a doctrine: "What have you to say that can rouse my enthusiasm? What good, what goals, have you to offer to command my affection as well as my belief? What avenue of emotional expression do you offer me in your fellowship and way of life?" This subjective satisfaction may not be the most essential test of religious value or truth, but it is one that must be met straightforwardly in keeping with its importance; a religious value or truth that is not important or true for *me* is only half a truth.

And again, though the way of devotion may end in sterile emotionalism, this is not necessarily the result. For though there may be emotion without action in religion, there is seldom action without emotion—here or anywhere; good works will not long persist without internal, emotional commitment on the part of the doer. Religious ritual without accompanying emotional stimulation becomes worse than useless; it becomes dishonest. And, more frequently than not, religious emotion has produced a genuine alteration of life or a reformation of society. Religion's basic problem here is to harness emotion to the right objectives, and keep it within its proper proportion—not to discourage or discount its expression.

## Chapter XXIII

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### THE WAY OF KNOWLEDGE: MYSTICAL INSIGHT

#### *Introduction*

To speak of religion as knowledge, and of that religious knowledge as mystical, will no doubt sound doubly strange to Western ears; for we have been thoroughly conditioned to think of both knowledge and religion in other terms. Knowledge to us means primarily scientific or factual knowledge of some sort, an organized body of observable data, which contrasts strongly in every way with religious faith. And either of the other two ways of conceiving religion—as a way of works or as a pattern of devotion—would seem more natural to us than to speak of it as knowledge. If religious knowledge enters into the picture for us at all, it is most likely to be in the form of information about the history, creeds, scriptures, or practices of our faith or another's; in any case, it would not be anything so vague-sounding or spiritual as mysticism.

Yet it should not seem so strange to us to think of religion as knowledge in a somewhat more direct sense. Why should not the religious man be concerned to know, rather directly and intimately, something of the Object of his devotion? Indeed, is it not necessary that a religion tell him something of that Object, if it is to prescribe a way of living for him that shall bring him to salvation? For this is what salvation means—right relations with the Supremely Real, however that be conceived. And how can one achieve such relations without knowing something of the nature of that to which he must adjust? Even the man who approaches religion in terms of devotion must center his devotion on some object of which he believes certain things are true, and of which his devotion will bring him a better understanding. And those who follow a code of law or perform good works assume that God is that sort of being Who requires that particular pattern of conduct to achieve salvation, and Who therefore reveals something of Himself in His requirements for men. Thus, though these two other ways of salvation do not put their main emphasis on the knowledge element, they must at least assume it somewhere in their structures in order to function as religion.



This suggests that we must understand that when religion thinks of itself as knowledge, it is as practical in its *intention* as applied science. It may be that philosophy values knowing for its own systematic sake, and that pure science is unwilling to set any limit to human curiosity in terms of what knowledge is "profitable" and what is not. But religion values its knowledge only as a technique for achieving salvation—not for the sake of that knowledge itself; it does not cherish the hope of knowing everything there is to know, but only those items most essential to this, its main concern. Religion is indeed quite ready to limit its interest in knowledge almost completely to such central concerns as the nature of God, His demands on us, and the proper way to fulfill them—and let all the rest go; it has neither time nor energy to attend to more than these few but essential truths.

It may seem that this statement of religion's utilitarian motives with regard to its knowledge overstates the case with regard to that pure specialist in religious knowledge, the mystic. For he seems to have something of the explorer's spirit; he is out to penetrate the "beyond that is within," or "the within that is beyond" all ordinary experiences in religion, to a depth that no one else has ever reached before. He seems to gain a certain joy in the prospect of piercing to ultimate truth, just for the sake of having scaled this highest mountain of experience or plumbed this deepest depth of the ocean of being. Like the pure scientist, he is not willing to set a limit on his desire to "know"—though the two of them would interpret that word very differently. The mystic would pierce through to an ultimate knowledge of the ultimate, and know the God of gods to the depth of His inmost being, without immediate thought of the practical or moral utility of such knowledge.

Yet even he cannot escape the essential salvation-mindedness of religion—for the mystic in his knowledge of ultimates is presenting also a way of salvation. He is maintaining that there *is* such a way, to be gained by an intensification and inwardization of that same knowledge all religious men claim in some measure. And he goes further, in maintaining that his way is the best of all the ways to gain salvation; the light of knowledge will liberate the seeker after salvation from bondage far more rapidly and surely than mere deeds and feelings. These tend to be a kind of unspiritual busyness about nonessentials and externals; or an ignorant belief in the power of mere emotionalism, which may leave the seeker after salvation even more enslaved than before. The clear light of disciplined insight alone can bring ultimate salvation. Thus the final justification the mystic seeks for his knowledge is the practical one of its efficacy for salvation, not its completeness or purity.

It is also true that religion has an insatiable hunger for a firsthand quality in its knowledge. Of course, in this it is strictly human. Most of us prefer to say, of

almost anything, "I saw it with my own eyes," rather than, "they tell me so"; we always feel more certain of the reality of what we have seen for ourselves than of what others have reported to us. Or, in other words, we prefer "knowledge of" to "knowledge about." Sometimes words seem mainly useful for pointing to experiences and realities that actually cannot be communicated, only indicated; they say only, "There it is!" There are indeed many special experiences, or even many aspects of common experiences, of which we can but say: "I can't tell you about it; you will have to experience it yourself to understand what I mean. It is a firsthand sort of thing that cannot be shared." Such is often the language and thought of religion. To experience is better than to know; in fact, the best kind of knowing is a kind of experiencing. Thus, when religion speaks of "knowing" we must understand that it is giving the word far more than an intellectual flavor; it would indicate thereby a firsthand kind of experiencing or inward realization.

One further feature of religious knowledge should be noted before we proceed to our study of the mystic way. Religious knowledge is not only a salvation technique, and something of a direct experience of the truth it enshrines, but it hopes to achieve a high degree of unity between knowing and doing—indeed, to make knowing a kind of doing. Religious knowing is not a mere knowing of facts about religion, or the putting of the concept of Supreme Reality into words, but a kind of attitude that dynamically involves the whole person. The man of faith is not interested in having an idea about God—true or false—just for itself, but in knowing God Himself; indeed, an essential part of the truth of an idea about God is that it leads a man to an experience of fellowship with Him. So we may say that religious knowing is a total sort, in which the total individual is turned to God; a kind of personal responsiveness rather than an act of intellect. This is why religious knowledge may be thought of, in this fuller sense, as providing a way of salvation, not just a quota of ideas.

### 1. *The Religious Mystic*

Now religious mysticism is but a special, a very intense and highly technical, expression of the rather general religious desire for a fully personal, direct knowledge of ultimate reality that may forward a man's progress along the way of salvation. Indeed, the other ways of salvation—works and devotion—have asserted that their patterns led to a kind of knowledge too; but because mysticism makes the most detailed claim to the pure and direct achievement of such knowledge, and because it is the most technical of all the ways of salvation, and most foreign to Western patterns of thought, we have saved its description to the last. *Webster* defines it as follows:



Mysticism is the doctrine or belief that direct knowledge of God, of spiritual truth, or ultimate reality, etc., is attainable through immediate intuition, insight, or illumination and in a way different from ordinary sense perception or ratiocination.<sup>1</sup>

The important words here are "direct" and "different." For the true mystic is not content to receive an indirect knowledge of God or ultimate reality through things, persons, symbols, doctrines, words, or even by any mere stirring of the emotions; the knowledge of God thus gained is for him too diluted and uncertain. He is sure that the spiritual reality that environs man can be known directly and certainly; he will not rest until he experiences a contact with God as direct and undoubted as one's physical senses seem to give him with the physical world. He yearns for an experience of immediacy of such intensity that there will never be need to doubt it or to depend on anyone or anything else to confirm it. As before noted, he wishes to close completely the gap between knower and known, seeker and sought, subject and object. Hence the mystic speaks frequently of "union" or "oneness" with ultimate reality as his supreme goal.

Now very obviously the mystic's motives here are the same, in general, as those of other religious men: he wishes to make contact in a meaningful way with the more-than-human. And we must emphasize that such a desire is perfectly legitimate in religion; a sense of direct contact with the Supreme Reality is what gives life and meaning to every religious rite at every level of religion. Somewhere along the line someone must have made such contact, of which the secondary element of doctrine, rite, or scripture is the product; and it is the hope of every worshiper—even when he uses other men's experiences—that in some measure at least he will participate with them in their experience of the religious reality.

The mystic is peculiar primarily in the quality of driving intensity with which he gives himself to his quest for God. He is persuaded that there is a way to know Him directly—yes, even to become one with Him—not alone after death, but in some sense here and now, in a foretaste of that complete oneness with the Divine that is the true human destiny. Nor will he be put off. Others may be content to dwell in the halfway houses of secondhand experiences embodied in ritual and religious institution; the mystic uses these devices only as long as they give him spiritual help in his search; if they come to stand between him and his goal, he will discard them. At best they can be only a sort of springboard to higher realities; the mystic presses on without delay to be one with God. Even if such seemingly essential and personal religious elements as prayer, religious terms, or even ideas seem unprofitable to him,

<sup>1</sup> *New International Dictionary*, Second Ed., 1945.

or hinder his progress toward his goal—and he usually professes to do without them all in the end—he will put them aside. Thus it is that mysticism has resulted in the creation of a highly individualistic philosophy of knowledge and discipline of heart and mind, which mark it off as a difficult and distinctive way of salvation.

## 2. *The Mystic Doctrine and Discipline*

So far we have described mysticism in terms of the mystic in search of God, and the intensity of that search as its distinguishing characteristic. This would seem to classify the mystic as the lonely spiritual adventurer who goes on his quest apart from all his fellows—a sheer individualist who cannot be compared with anyone else. And so, for the most part, he is. Yet there are enough likenesses between the individual mystics, and the ways they have followed in seeking union with Supreme Reality, to warrant our speaking of them as a group who follow their own distinctive road to salvation.

We may begin by saying that the mystic believes that there is in the human soul—every human soul—a *special God-knowing power*, which is not to be identified with any other of the human capacities, senses, or faculties. It is something in the order of a sixth or seventh sense. Quakers have called it the “inner light”; Hindus and Buddhists give the impression of conceiving it as the concentration of the totality of one’s psychic powers at one vital point, rather than as a special faculty. Whatever the language, the meaning is plain: either by the use of special powers, or the concentration of all ordinary ones, man is capable of attaining a face-to-face knowledge of God, beyond and above the processes of ordinary thought. The author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, a medieval Christian mystical writing, suggests that would-be seers of God should even trample all *thoughts* of God beneath them, and concentrate on the heart’s “naked intent” to pierce through the “cloud” to God Himself. Even if they cannot frame a satisfactory definition of God, they maintain that He can be known by—and only by—this one-pointed love.

We need to emphasize again that when the mystic speaks of “knowing” God he means much more than having a clear idea or correct doctrine about Him. He speaks in the general religious context of the knowing of God as an experience of Him—only more so. The mystic speaks of knowing God in the sense of becoming one with Him in actual metaphysical substance—as a drop of ocean spray falls back into the mother ocean and becomes one with it again. Christian mysticism, to be sure, has had some reservations in this area, because of the strong Christian tradition of the personal nature of God and its equally strong conviction about man’s essential, personal quality; and personalities are difficult to merge. Yet some Christian mystics, even so, have come near to such



a viewpoint. And Hinduism—as we might expect, with its traditional conception of reality as impersonal—frequently speaks of the absorption of the individual *atman* or soul into Brahman, anticipatively in this life, completely and without remainder in the life to come.

From this a second doctrine flows very directly: if a man can thus know Supreme Reality and be united with It (Him), then there must be *an intrinsic likeness between man and Reality*. Buddhism, indeed, was hard put to it in its early form to fit into this general mystical pattern; for its formal teaching was *anatta*, no-soul, with regard to man, the nonexistence of gods, and the final state of Nirvana as a “going out” of the individual into a measureless abyss. Yet its pattern of life was mystical; and later Buddhism clearly taught the ascension of the individual to a state of oneness with Reality. Certainly with other mysticisms the case is clear: Hindus, Moslems, and Christians consider that the possibility of mystical knowledge rests on the essential likeness of spiritual man and spiritual Reality. Hinduism puts it very clearly: a man comes to salvation when he fully realizes that *atman*, his own soul, and Brahman, the World Soul, are one.

But a third statement must be made at once: though man has within him the potentiality of a supersensible kind of knowledge and an inborn God-likeness that may unify him again with God, *his potentiality does not become actuality without the most ardent disciplines*. “Natural” man—that is, an ordinary man untouched by divine grace or unchanged by the operation of a consistent spiritual discipline—can never hope to see God. Nor are strenuous effort and emotional longing sufficient of themselves to bring this vision to pass; in fact, unenlightened men may defeat themselves by the very energy with which they seek to gain their goal. Buddha criticized the extreme ascetics of his day for seeking enlightenment by physical tortures, and the Brahmins for seeking it by meticulous ritualism. There must be rather a discerning use of discipline, and a most discriminating direction of one’s zeal, before he can attain the true knowledge that leads to salvation.

This implies in the fourth place *a technique of discipline* that is essential to mysticism. For while a man must find his own way to salvation, he may go astray unless he is guided by suggestions from others. There is indeed a specific technique to be found in every mysticism of any importance; and still further, there are striking similarities in these techniques, even though they occur in radically different religious traditions. Aldous Huxley, in fact, would see in these similarities the presence of the one essentially true religion beneath the multitude of sectarian doctrinal distortions.<sup>2</sup> Whether we accept this interpreta-

<sup>2</sup> *The Perennial Philosophy*, Harper, 1945.

tion or not, it is a fact that basic similarities among mysticisms do exist, despite superficial differences. These are in part due to the surprising amount of actual historical interchange among mystics, and still more due to the psychological similarity of mystic methods wherever found.

Dean Inge<sup>3</sup> points out that we may distinguish three general stages of spiritual attainment portrayed in all mysticisms: first, the *purgative*, or self-disciplining stage. Evil attitudes, wrong thoughts, worldliness, lustful and covetous desires, and the like, must be cast out or overcome. No one can skip this stage; and—depending on the individual—it may be a long and arduous process. (Obviously the various religious catalogues of evils are not peculiar products of mysticism itself, but are drawn from the formal teaching of the respective religious traditions in which the mysticism occurs.) Second, there is the *illuminative* stage, in which the seeker begins in increasing measure to gain the power of a total concentration of his spiritual and mental faculties on a chosen subject, or to let the inner light shine more clearly. As he perfects himself in this state he can deliberately cut himself off from the outer world of time, space, and sense, and center his “naked intent” on God, Brahman, Allah, or Nirvana. The third state is that of the saving insight that brings *union* with ultimate Reality. This union is evidenced by an ecstasy or rapture, in which the mystic is “carried out of himself” and his ordinary modes of consciousness into an overwhelming sense of oneness with the Reality he seeks. To the observer from without he may seem insensible, or even near death; but to the experiencer from within everything is unutterably glorious and peaceful. He is foretasting what will be his condition in immeasurably greater degree when he shall finally be released from the body.

Two questions may be asked at this point: first, what happens to the mystic when he has achieved his experience of “union” with the Divine? Does he remain permanently in this state of inward rapture? The answer is no, but . . . Mystic trances are of varied duration, from a few moments up to several hours—though the mystic himself is unaware of their length; for he has a sense of timelessness when in union with God. But sooner or later he must come back to a more normal state of consciousness; in fact, he not only comes back to normal, but often is depressed for a time by his seeming separation from God. Mystics speak of “dry periods,” in which there is an unaccountable lack of emotion; these may reach such a pitch of intensity that they become a “dark night of the soul”—to use one mystic’s phrase—a kind of deepest darkness before the re-dawning of God’s conscious presence. Yet in the end many mystics report a more or less permanent sense of union pervading all their waking moments,

<sup>3</sup> *Christian Mysticism*, Scribner, 1899.



and giving them a feeling of freedom and fulfillment. So the Catholic mystic, Santa Teresa, in her last years; so the Buddhist *arhat*, waiting in coolness and calmness for final release from the body.

The other question: does the mystic's discipline of cutting himself off from the outer world, both physically and consciously, include severe asceticism? And one must answer that the mystical discipline has often been accompanied by extremely harsh treatment of the body; for the mystic tends to regard the body as the main hindrance to the activities of the pure spirit. It is the bodily element that has to be conquered in the stage of purgation, and it is the body that in the end prevents his complete and permanent union with God. Therefore the mystic will disregard the body in his onward march to salvation, and ruthlessly trample it underfoot—or even attack it with hostility, if it seems to get in his way. Suso, the medieval Christian mystic, subjected himself to unbelievable tortures.

Yet one must say in fairness that the goal of the mystic is seldom mere self-torture for its own sake. He is far more interested in spiritual purification than in bodily mortification; indeed, he undertakes the latter, if at all, only for the sake of the former. The mild Quaker mysticism calls for a reduction of life's necessary mechanics and needs to a bare simplicity, in order to allow the Inner Light to shine more brightly. Suso had no thought of requiring others to follow his pattern of extreme asceticism, but imposed it on himself for his own profit. Buddha positively warned his followers against severe austerities, because they placed the emphasis on the wrong point and did not produce enlightenment; the "middle way" which he recommended might seem extremely ascetic to Westerners, but was mild according to Indian standards. And the medieval Christian mystics were no more ascetic, as a rule, than hundreds of nonmystical monks and nuns who followed equally rigid rules.

One final comment may be made about the mystic. When asked about the content of his knowledge, what he "sees" or "knows" in his moments of ecstatic vision, which he declares to be so superlatively valuable, he replies: "I cannot tell you. I cannot describe in words what I have seen and known"—that is to say, the content of mystic experience is ineffable. But if you press him further he will often give one or two reasons for his inability to communicate his experience. He may say that the Reality he has known is too great, too different from ordinary realities to be described in human language. One can only say about it—as the Hindu does about Brahman, the World-Soul—"Neti, neti"—"No, no," or "Nothing, nothing"; that is, the World-Soul cannot be described by any of the adjectives often applied to God—good, powerful, kind, loving—without limiting and falsifying his nature. Christian mystics often spoke of God as the "Unconditioned," and refused to use the standard theo-

logical terms. And the other answer is that mystical knowledge is not mere idea, but a direct experience that can be "known" only by personal participation. J. B. Pratt tells us in his *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism* of a conversation he had with a Buddhist monk whom he asked to describe the meaning of Nirvana, the supreme goal of Buddhist effort. In an intense tone, full of feeling, the monk replied, "Unspeakable bliss."<sup>4</sup>

Yet strangely—and quite inconsistently—the mystic has often been one of the most voluble of persons. A tremendous literature of mystical inspiration is in existence, much of it the writing or direct reporting to others by the mystics themselves. The mystic appears to be so filled with a sense of the splendor and importance of his direct knowledge of Reality that with all his might he is trying to tell the outsider what it is all about. Even though he knows that words will fail him, he will use them as far as they will take him; perhaps the hearer will thereby catch a glimmer of the greater reality beyond them. He hopes that his words will be sign-posts along the way, communicating some direction to others who would follow it. But of the experience itself he despairs of telling anyone; no words are made that will contain its fullness.

Thus the mystic is often a spirited and poetic writer who fills old words to bursting with ineffable meanings, or coins new ones. He loves similes, metaphors, flashing analogies, and powerful figures of speech of all kinds. Frequently he speaks by parable—which means that many will not understand him. "So be it," says the mystic. "He that hath ears to hear, let *him* hear. My words will find lodging in the ready heart; they will have meaning to the prepared, will interpret themselves to the sensitive in spirit. After all, I am not explaining, only witnessing. It is God's business, not mine, in which hearts my witness does its work, if at all."

Such, then, are the main features of the mystic way. And, as has been implied, it has found important expression in nearly every major faith. Confucianism is perhaps an exception, but it was always more of an ethic or social culture than a religion—at least for the masses; and the two other faiths that filled in specifically religious elements in Chinese culture—Taoism and Buddhism—were both mystical. Mysticism has had a limited career in Judaism, not easily expressing itself within the Jewish pattern; some, to be sure, would call the prophets mystics, but this is dubious. Nevertheless, Judaism does have its mystic tradition among the Hasidim, who flourished in the Middle Ages. Even dry, hard Islam produced its notable mystics—the Sufi, who made important contributions to Islamic devotional literature and influenced the course of its theology. In Christendom the mystic tradition is a major one, especially in Roman Ca-

<sup>4</sup> Macmillan, 1928, p. 619.



tholicism, studded with many brilliant names—Bernard of Clairvaux, Catherine of Sienna, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, and numerous others. Those medieval devotional classics, *On the Imitation of Christ*, *Theologia Germanica*, and *The Cloud of Unknowing*, are products of mystics or of persons powerfully influenced by them.

The Orient, however, has been the prime contributor of mystics and mystical religions. In China there was Taoism, a prevalent nature mysticism that found a considerable following even among the practical Chinese. Japan's Shintoism is something of the same variety; Japan has in fact given a sort of esthetic-mystical touch to most of its religious expressions. But it is in India that we come to the fountainhead of all Eastern mysticism. Perhaps Sir Charles Eliot overstates the case when he declares that mysticism is a rare flower elsewhere, but "in India mysticism was and is as common as prayer and as popular as science."<sup>5</sup> Yet most of the facts seem to be on his side, for India is the home of two great religions that have majored in mysticism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Now Hinduism has its hard legalistic aspect, and its devotional cults dominate the contemporary religious scene, yet these also are permeated by the mystical viewpoint; for even India's emotional and legal expressions of religion usually reach mystical levels. Indeed the hard realities of caste are somewhat softened by its influence, for the magic wand of mysticism transforms every outward thing into a kind of shadow-shape of insubstantial vagueness, and turns men's thoughts introspectively toward their own mental and spiritual states. It is no doubt this mystical vagueness that enables Indian religion to be so notably tolerant.

Our major illustration of mysticism will then be drawn from Indian sources—Buddhism and Hinduism; for here it is that mysticism is most fully at home and has achieved its purest form. Here we can find some of the best examples of the distinctive mystical techniques of salvation. In addition—largely by way of some contrasts—we shall touch more briefly on three other varieties of mysticism: naturalistic Taoism from China; the Sufi from medieval Islam; and the Christian mysticism of Spanish Catholic Santa Teresa.

### 3. *Hindu and Buddhist Mysticism*

It will be necessary to fill in something of the general religious history of India before we can understand its mysticism; for India's mysticism is intimately tied up with its religious history, and is the expression of its traditional religious viewpoint. And because these are so different from ours in so many ways, considerable effort will be necessary to bridge the gap in understanding.

<sup>5</sup> *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Edward Arnold, 1921, Vol. I, p. 323.

### a. *Historical Background*

The first fact to understand about India is its complete religiosity. Religion has permeated Indian life and thought unbrokenly for at least two and a half millennia; and by contrast with the West, where philosophy and religion long ago parted company, in India one is hard put to it to distinguish between them. In Sir Charles Eliot's words:

Philosophy is more closely connected with religion in India than in Europe. It is not a dispassionate scientific investigation but a practical religious quest. Even the Nyaya school, which is chiefly concerned with formal logic, promises that by the removing of false knowledge it can emancipate the soul and give the bliss of salvation.<sup>6</sup>

Thus for the Indian even formal logic is not a mere intellectual exercise, it is a way of salvation. Or one may put it thus: the atheists in India are themselves ardent seekers after salvation. On this point there is no difference between the Sankhya teaching, which recognizes only individual souls and matter as real, atheistic early Buddhism, the Vedantist doctrine of the oneness of man-soul and World-Soul, or Yogin techniques of breath-control—they all seek salvation.

This long-standing union of philosophy and religion began with the writing of the Upanishads about 600 B.C. Literally "Upanishad" means "confidential sittings" at the feet of a teacher, or "secret doctrines"; actually the Upanishads are philosophic speculations of a high order about the ancient and crudely expressed doctrines of the Vedic Scriptures. What resulted therefrom is basic for the understanding of Indian religion, for the Upanishads set the great religious-philosophical pattern that has been basic in Hinduism ever since. However variably Hindu sects have expressed themselves, and however radically Jainism and Buddhism may have revolted from Brahmanism in their founding, they all have accepted two Upanishadic features: first, its mystical conception that salvation is to be gained through a kind of knowledge; second, its basic metaphysical doctrines about the structure of the world and human life.

The fundamental Upanishadic conviction about the outer world is that it is somewhat unreal and basically impermanent; these philosophers tell us that the realm of time and space, physical form and individual existences, is but a passing show. Is it not true that individual persons, animals, and plants are born, mature, grow old, and die—all within a few years? Do not fashions of living change, rulers come and go, kingdoms rise and fall? Indeed, are not the individual items that make up our so-solid-seeming world—including man himself—the most impermanent of Nature's creations? Even Nature itself has its varied rhythms: the changing seasons, creation and life walking hand in hand

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 291.



with destruction and death, old forms disappearing and new ones replacing them. And no doubt there was a time when Nature itself was not in existence. The Upanishads call the whole world we know by our senses, *samsara*—and the word is a synonym for the essence of all that is fleeting and intransient.

From this brooding sense of the impermanence of all earthly things arises the deep-seated Indian pessimism. The Upanishadic philosopher feels acutely that man has no lasting home here in space and time; that he himself as an individual is perhaps no lasting form of being. He calls the world of *samsara* by another name as well, "Maya," that is, illusion or unreality; as beings in that world we are enmeshed in its unreality, because we often ignorantly clutch these shadow-shapes of things and persons to ourselves as though they were truly real. Hence arises man's bondage and his grief: the service of the unreal as though it were the real, devotion to the transient as though it were the eternal.

This sense of disillusion with the world is not peculiar to India, of course; all religions are characterized by it to some degree, else they would never speak longingly of an "other" world than the one they have here. Nor does it mean that the Indian has always lived in perpetual despair, constantly contemplating suicide; on the contrary, there has been considerable color and joy in both his life and his religion. And further, it must be said that some of the pessimism we find here is the product of abstracted study rather than practical despair. It is in part a product of the maturing of the Indian mind beyond the primitive, joyful, boisterousness that can be found in the ancient religion of the Vedas; it is the sort of world-weariness natural to the philosopher—a wise man realizing that life is often frustrating, and that one needs other resources besides the physical.

Yet, for all these qualifications, Indian pessimism is both real and profound. Any joyful notes to be found in Indian religions—at least on the higher levels of thought and writing—are only minor themes; the basic mood is one of genuine world-weariness and sorrow. No great, all-embracing purpose can be seen threaded through the strands of human life, nor any master plan in history. Life is something rather like a nightmare of jumbled odds and ends, half horrible, half unreal. Indeed, Buddhism was willing to make the flat statement that existence is suffering, and therefore essentially horrible and meaningless.

But this is neither the end nor the peculiar depth of Indian pessimism; its doctrine of *transmigration of souls*, popularly called reincarnation, adds to its gloom a special dimension. The essence of this doctrine is that my present human existence is only the latest-constructed one of a long, connected series of existences; this same soul or personal identity that is now I, has already lived through many forms—some perhaps as disembodied spirit, some as an-

imal, and perhaps others as human being. My present place in society, whether as outcaste or Brahmin, my physical appearance, whether ugly or beautiful, my life course, whether pleasant or unhappy, are all the result of what I have done of good or ill in past existences. This is called the Law of Karma or the deed. Of course the ordinary man is not aware of all those past existences—though Buddhist saints did profess to have an insight, just before their supreme moment of illumination, in which they “saw” all their previous existences pass in review. Fantastic? yet how else can one as satisfactorily explain the inequalities of human status?

And, still further, this chain of being may extend indefinitely into the future: this Wheel of Life to which all beings are inescapably bound may carry my soul on forever into new births. The tendency in the rebirth cycle seems to be on the whole downward, as though a kind of second law of spiritual thermodynamics were operating here. Even the gods sporting in their pleasurable paradises will descend in the scale of being when their good Karma exhausts itself—as it must do in time. And there are vast depths below even the lowest human status—that of reincarnation in an animal or as a disembodied spirit wandering for thousands of years in the cold, the hot, the pain-wracked purgatories.

Nor would it do any good for one to seek escape through suicide; such an act would only bind him even more tightly to the Wheel of Life—and probably at a lower level. And even if one might rather improbably count on an even-keeled existence at an average human level, what would be the net result? Only endless repetitions of the same old worn-out melodrama of birth to death by the same weary old soul, continually frustrated both by fulfilled and unfulfilled desire, bound by the shackles of individuality. Salvation, then, must be in terms of a total and radical escape from individual existence as we know it, the entrance into an entirely different mode of existence—at least an utter ceasing from this one.

Now ancient India was united on the need for salvation and its general character, but somewhat divided on the ways to achieve it. The bhakti devotional way had not yet developed. But there was the way of *ritualism*—a sub-variety of the way of works—that we have seen operating in the *Laws of Manu*; let one perform the proper sacrifices to the gods under direction of the Brahmin priests, and live according to his caste regulations, and he might in the end achieve rebirth in the heavens of the gods—perhaps even achieve release from the round of rebirth. Obviously for lower castes this would be a long process, requiring several human rebirths, and a final birth as a Brahmin, in order to be in line for it. And there was the way of *asceticism* or self-denial—also a variety of the way of works. Asceticism, indeed, had been from the very beginning an important and pervasive feature of Indian religions; its main convic-



tion was, and is, that by means of the humiliation of the body the interests of the soul are forwarded, *ipso facto*; indeed, the body may be so nearly reduced to nothingness that the spirit becomes all. From this root grew the not uncommon austerities of measuring one's length on the ground for mile after mile of pilgrimage, stretching one's arm aloft until it withered from disuse, or lying on beds of spikes.

But the aristocrat of the roads to salvation in India has always been and still is the way of *knowledge*. Even though there are very distinctive and popular expressions of the other two ways, this way has been the classic way ever since the days of the Upanishads. Indeed one wonders sometimes whether the other ways are not really forms of the way of knowledge; for in the end each one seeks for a kind of insight or vision that shall release man from this round of rebirths; and each of the other ways is often interpreted in mystical terms. The mystic rather assumes, in fact, that sooner or later all saved souls will take his route; he believes that the salvation gained by ritualism, asceticism, or in these latter days by bhakti, is only a partial one. True salvation—the utterly radical variety that alone releases man from existence—comes only when, by a mystically achieved knowledge, he fully realizes the nature of that existence.

This mystical knowledge builds in general on two foundations—one negative, the other positive. The negative we have already observed; it is a firm conviction of the unreality and the impermanence of life forms. Sometimes this seems to be the only aspect of that knowledge—especially with negativistic Buddhism, whose main doctrine is that existence is suffering, and that salvation is release from existence through the realization of its true nature. But there is a positive element also; and many modern Hindus and Buddhists would insist that all along it has been the main one. It is that Absolute, that Super-Reality, before whose absoluteness all lesser realities are not truly real; compared to it they are like the reflections of the sun in a dirty glass, as contrasted to the sun itself. This, they would say, is the only sense in which the world is Maya, or illusion, and human selves unreal: they are not unreal in themselves, but are only less real than this Supreme Reality; and the knowledge of them is illusory only if compared to the full knowledge of the Absolute. When the Indian mystic says "Neti, neti" it is of this positive reality that he is speaking; it is too great for words, incomparable to anything we know.

Now though we may not be able to describe this reality in intellectual terms, we can *know* it—that is, experience and realize it. In those moments of ecstatic trance, in which man becomes unaware of what goes on about him in the physical world and experiences a kind of timeless spacelessness or spaceless timelessness—that, the mystic declares, is the quality of the Super-Reality. In those moments he is in union with the Absolute or World Soul; no questions need

be asked, no answers given, for knower and Known are one. Buddhism, to be sure, was never quite as positive—particularly in its early stages; yet Nirvana, its great goal, came more and more to have a positive interpretation as bliss to be achieved and Reality to be known.

From this two-sided realization of the lesser reality of Maya and the superior reality of the Absolute comes man's salvation. When once he has tasted of the true Reality, all the lesser forms of reality to which he has been attached in this world of Maya—bodily pleasure, money, fame, reputation, career, the love or hate of other persons, life itself—no longer attract or repel him; he sees them for what they are: unrealities. He recognizes that his own individual self has no more separate reality than the droplet tossed up from the ocean; therefore he is freed from fretting anxiety about things of this world. They are in real truth not worth worrying about, or taking seriously enough to like or dislike, love or hate. And when he realizes this in the depths of his being, he is on the high road to liberation; the truly liberating illumination is his. It is because the ways of works and devotion so often result in attachments to things, persons, or states of consciousness, that the mystic distrusts their efficacy as ways to salvation; the saved life must be utterly detached—even from good things, qualities, and persons.

This saving knowledge of reality has one important corollary: it implies that the Reality is mental or spiritual rather than physical. Obviously it is not physical, because the physical realm of time and space is that which changes and passes away. And it is when a man is cut off from sense awareness of this realm, sunk in the depths of his own spirit, that he achieves knowledge of the timeless and spaceless. Therefore there is something in man like the Absolute; it is the *atman* or soul; it is of the same quality as Brahman, the Absolute, just as a glass of water may be of the same salt quality as an ocean—the two are one in quality if not in quantity or form. Yet this Reality is not another person, exactly, because individual human personality is also unreal; human beings are space-time units, anchored to bodies, having wants, desires, likes, and dislikes. Only when we “get out of ourselves” and our preoccupation with our own concerns do we realize the freedom of the Absolute. So it is that Hindu-Buddhist mysticism nearly always conceived the Supreme Reality, not as a personal God, but as an impersonal Absolute that is above or beyond the personal, in which the person must lose himself to be saved.

#### b. *Buddhism's Mystical Technique*

Such is the range of ideas among which Indian mysticism came into being, and on which it founded its techniques of salvation. We shall next examine the Buddhist technique, because it is clearly defined, and represents mystic



technique in its purest form. In fact, Buddhism began as a technique rather than a set of doctrines—though some basic beliefs were presupposed. We shall deal mainly with the early form of Indian Buddhism, before its sharp outlines became blurred by its Chinese and Japanese developments, and before it had been reabsorbed in India by a resurgent Hinduism.

Buddhism began its life as a protest movement; it was in both practical and theoretical revolt against contemporary Brahmanism. For one thing, Buddha was critical of the caste interpretation of religion; Brahmanism was not a caste quality, he held, but an inward spiritual capacity—reminding one of Paul's distinction between circumcision of the flesh and of the spirit. Theoretically he opened the doors of salvation to all castes; actually his movement was mainly recruited from the warrior caste, who have always been envious or contemptuous of the Brahmin; and only the more educated could understand his way. He disbelieved in the gods in honor of whom Brahmin priests called for offerings—or at least he did not consider that they could save a man. But his greatest quarrel was with ritual as such; sacramental salvation was not genuine, said Buddha. It might raise men on the ladder of rebirth, but it left them still on that ladder, under the power of Karma and the subject to rebirth.

Buddha also quarreled with the doctrine of the *atman*, or soul, in which the Upanishads had majored and by which even priestly Brahmanism had been influenced. Whereas they said that salvation was achieved when the *atman* by sacrificial or mystical means realized its oneness with Brahman (the Absolute), Buddha denied the existence of an entity called the soul. Where they spoke of union of the *atman* with Brahman, he spoke of the "going out" of the soul as the supremely desirable state. Observe the self, said Buddha: is it permanent or lasting? Are not its states quicksilverish, coming and going, changing faster than even the bodily states? Does not even consciousness desert us at times—say in deep sleep? If, then, we are so uncertain of this self, how can we speak with such confidence of the Absolute to which it may be joined?

Yet, for all this criticism, Buddhism actually accepted much more of Brahmanism and the Upanishads than it rejected. The doctrines of the transmigration of souls and the operation of the Law of Karma were basic to Buddhist thinking, even though it was hard put to it to explain how an *anatta*, or no-soul, could persist on into a new life. So too in the same sense, the world and all its forms of individuality were looked upon as unreal or *Maya*. And, most important of all, Buddhism had the same general confidence as the Upanishads in the mystical way of achieving salvation; indeed, it went beyond them, and prescribed a very definite technique of achieving salvation by means of a meditative discipline that in the end would bring the saving enlightenment—*i.e.*, a mystical knowledge of reality.

The basic doctrine of Buddhism is its "Four Noble Truths." The first of these is: *All existence is suffering*. Buddhists in the early days bore down intensively on this belief. In the *Psalms of the Brethren*<sup>7</sup> and *Psalms of the Sisters*,<sup>8</sup> early Buddhist testimonies to salvation, the need of man's salvation is graphically described. Man's life is a flood of ill: he is subject to devilish temptations by Mara, the victim of pain, old age, death, racked by fear and doubt, and oppressed by the haunting sense of the impermanence of all things human. And overarching the whole gamut of ills is the dismal prospect that such a sorry career must be endlessly repeated in the new births to come.

The second "Noble Truth" is: *The cause of suffering is desire*. Desire is what makes the Wheel of Life go round, and what binds man to it. Birth is occasioned by sexual desire; and man continues in life and all its deluding activities by virtue of his desireful being. He both desires individual things, like pleasant bodily states, prosperity, success, and fame, and he also clings resolutely to personal existence itself—a basic type of desire that is the root of all lesser desires. This analysis is Buddha's own special contribution.

The third "Noble Truth" presents Buddha's drastic remedy for the situation: *Suffering may be overcome by the destruction of desire*. As before noted, this does not mean suicide; the thought of suicide is the mark of the ignorant man, and denotes that he is still tied to life—even if only by hatred of it. Rather one must find a way by mental and spiritual discipline to dry up the fountain of desire within himself—not only of the lesser specific desires, but the root desire for life itself. He must achieve a passionlessness of spirit that is indifferent to attraction or revulsion, heat or cold, physical appetite, and even to life itself. Buddha did not encourage an extreme asceticism here, for he had tried that way himself and found it unenlightening—perhaps because savage austerities fastened more attention on the body (negatively) than they destroyed. Illumination as to the utter worthlessness, the complete emptiness, of all creatures of time and space, their positive dangerousness in binding one to suffering—this was Buddha's chosen weapon. Only by utter inward detachment from life was freedom from life to be gained.

The fourth "Noble Truth" is a complex one, called the *Eightfold Aryan Path*. ("Aryan" comes from those largely prehistoric days of the noble Aryan conquerors of India, and is a synonym for excellence.) Actually it is an outline of the detailed Buddhist technique for destroying desire, and achieving the enlightening vision that would bring final salvation. It is peculiar to Buddhism in its form of statement; but its general pattern demonstrates the three-stage

<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Rhys Davids, ed., *Psalms of the Buddhists*, Pali Text Society, Oxford University Press, 1937. Vol. I.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 1932.



progress of the mystic that which we noted earlier—purgation, illumination, union.

The first five stages may be grouped together as one. They are the lowest level of Buddhist discipline, which may be practiced even by the layman who is not trying for salvation in this present life, but desires to start on the way upward by building a supply of good Karma for his next incarnation. They are also essential for the monk—though of course he must go on beyond them. Each is prefaced by the adjective “right,” signifying “conducive to salvation”: (1) *right views*, or doctrine, meaning primarily a knowledge and conviction of the truth of the “Four Noble Truths”; (2) *right resolve*, or the keeping of oneself from malice, indulgent pleasures, harmful deeds to others; (3) *right speech*, which consists in curbing the tongue from idle chatter and slander; (4) *right conduct*, or the extension of the harmless benevolence observed in speech over into the realm of concrete deeds of mercy; (5) *right livelihood*, or the avoidance of occupations that would harm others or destroy life, such as slave-dealing, butchering animals, or selling intoxicants and poisons.

This is the foundational *purgative* stage, which includes an elementary discipline of mind, body, and emotions. For while Buddhism professes, like mysticism in general, to rise “above” morality at the climax of its experience, it is noteworthy that it begins with a moral conditioning that is absolutely essential to further progress. The layman who cannot observe even the rudimentary disciplines of abstaining from gluttony or sexual misconduct is obviously not ready to begin the pilgrimage to salvation. And if a monk cannot control himself in these matters, how can he be expected to learn that more expert control of the mind and emotions necessary to reach the higher stages of knowledge? Thus Buddhism was never an irresponsibly dreamy mysticism, but from the beginning a serious moral discipline.

So far the layman can go. But important as these five steps are, they do not bring one to Nirvana—that is, to release from rebirth. With the sixth and seventh steps, which correspond to the second or *illuminative* mystic stage, we enter into what is properly the full-scale monkish discipline of salvation. (For with Buddhism only those who had left the world, soon or late, to become monk or nun, could achieve salvation.) The discipline of this stage can be interpreted to mean the achievement of those states of mind necessary to the gaining of the final desired state of passionlessness. *Right effort*, the sixth step, is an untiringly alert discrimination between wise and unwise desires; or—perhaps better—it is a discipline of the natural tendency toward wrong attachments, to be achieved by concentrated contemplation on selected themes. Favorite themes are the impermanence of the world, the disgusting foulness of the body—in particular the female body (as an antidote to lust)—the transience of the self,

and the emptiness of this physical life. The seventh step is *right mindfulness*, which means total mastery over all sense impressions, complete inner self-control. At this stage the aspirant is perfecting his inner self to become sharp and one-pointed in its concentration, so that, undistracted by bodily sensations or wayward thoughts of any sort, he will be enabled to pierce through the veil of sense to that final illumination and its consequent cool and calm.

The following stanzas from the *Psalms of the Brethren* describe the pattern of the seeker's life:

Lonely the spot and far away where noise  
Scarce comes, the haunt of creatures of the wild;  
'Tis there the Brother should his couch prepare  
For purposes of studious retreat.

From rubbish-pile, or from the charnel field,  
Or from the highways let him take and bring  
Worn clothes and thence a cloak of patchwork make,  
And in such rough apparel clothe himself.

In lowliness of mind from house to house  
In turn unbroken let the Brother fare  
Seeking his alms, sense guarded, well controlled,  
With any fare content, rough though it be. . . .

In great content, with very sparse desires,  
Remote, secluded; so the sage should live,  
Detached from housefolk and the homeless both.<sup>9</sup>

Thus the seeker prepares himself: living apart from others, paying only so much attention to the body as is necessary to keep it going, giving the major portion of each day to learning self-control of every sense and thought.

But there is a last stage in the Eightfold Path, and to this all the rest of the Path tends as to its final goal. Buddhists call it *right concentration, or right rapture*; and it corresponds to what, earlier in this chapter, we have called the mystic union with God. It is the point at which the final saving enlightenment is to be gained. And what then shall be our picture of the seeker at this stage, as he prepares for his right raptural experience? Behind him lies a long period of intense outer and inner discipline. All the first five steps were long ago mastered and steadily practiced; ordinary temptations and distractions no longer bother him—indeed he is scarcely aware of the outer world. He has disciplined his emotions, reduced his physical wants to an absolute minimum, learned to concentrate his mind completely on whatever point he chooses. Now, utterly alone, fully bent on his quest, he prepares himself for the final effort.

<sup>9</sup> Stanzas 577 ff.



The achievement of full illumination appears to require in many cases a final spurt of effort. The seeker becomes urgent to achieve his quest—impatiently determined to reach the end of his journey. One of the Brothers has expressed it thus:

Valiant in energy I onward pressed.  
 Now an it must be, let this body break  
 And waste and let its flesh consume,  
 My limbs let falter at the knee and fail;  
 I will not eat nor will I drink again,  
 Nor from this lodging let me issue forth  
 Nor will I even lie upon my side,  
 While yet the dart of Craving lies undrawn! <sup>10</sup>

For the supreme effort this mystic seeker calls on a technique which Buddha may have gained from the Yogin pattern. He has been practicing a measure of this all along, but now he expects it to yield its full fruitage. Seating himself in the standard meditative posture, cross-legged, with hands slack in his lap and eyes cast down, he makes his breathing shallower and shallower till an observer can perceive no breathing at all. He may fix his gaze steadily on some object, such as a circular spot on the wall in front of him, or his own navel; what he looks at is not important, except as it keeps his attention from wandering. He seeks to reduce his awareness of the world about him by "withdrawing" his senses from contact with it, until he becomes in fact completely insensible to what goes on about him. Inwardly he may begin by meditating on a standard theme: the corruption of the body, impermanence, whatever he has found that served him best to induce a spiritual awareness; he tries to lessen the quantity of his thought and improve its quality by pinpointing it on the chosen theme.

And now what happens at this moment of supreme effort? or better, what *may* happen?—for effort does not always bring it at once. As a matter of fact the *arhat*, or enlightened one, is very sparse on details. He describes it often as a feeling of "coolness and calm," a sense of utter, measureless peace. A Sister describes her deliverance in these words:

My cloak thrown off,  
 My little bowl o'erturned; so sit I here  
 Upon the rock. And o'er my spirit sweeps  
 The breath of Liberty! I win, I win  
 The Triple Lore! The Buddha's will is done. <sup>11</sup>

If one asks, liberty from what? the Sister would have replied: from the fretting

<sup>10</sup> Stanzas 311 ff.

<sup>11</sup> *Psalm of the Sisters*, stanza 30.

fires of fear, envy, hatred, doubt, lust, and every strong emotion; from the desire for life itself; from the dread of rebirth. (The "Triple Lore" here spoken of may represent a later addition. A reminiscence of all one's former births, the power of supernatural insight, and a conviction that salvation in Nirvana is assured by the destruction of one's thirst for life, are the three component parts of the "Lore.") Sometimes also there are definite ecstatic overtones of bodily thrill that creep into the description:

Buoyant in sooth my body, every pulse  
Throbbing in wondrous bliss and ecstasy.  
Even as cotton-down blown on the breeze,  
So floats and hovers this my body light.<sup>12</sup>

But the main content of the experience is the assurance that rebirth into this physical life will never be one's lot again. How is he so sure of it? Because he now knows in every fiber of his being that he is free from all desire of every sort. The ties of love and hatred, fear and desire, which have bound him to things, people, life itself, are all cut. The Buddha's will is done; he has achieved utter detachment, a nerveless passionlessness toward everything. And, attached to nothing, he cannot come back to birth—for it is attachment that causes rebirth; he is beyond the power of the Law of Karma. Is the Nirvanic peace he has found eternal? Is one conscious there, or not? Can one call it existence, or is it annihilation? Such questions were never discussed by Buddha. Nirvana, he said, is a going out of the flickering flame of a personal existence, a cooling of the fever of desire for life, forever. And one who experiences this cool and calm that results from the long disciplined way will not ask for more.

#### 4. *Taoist Mysticism*

While the Buddhist pattern of mystical techniques was being worked out in India by Buddha and his disciples in the 6th century B.C., another mystical pattern had taken shape to the north and east in China. The somewhat legendary Lao Tse, the "founder" of Taoism, had perhaps passed on to his union with the Tao principle only shortly before Buddha was born. But the two systems—if Taoism may be called a system—are in rather striking contrast to each other. One is an intellectually subtle, clearly defined technique, with its later important philosophical developments; the other is a crude, rather simple nature mysticism that later degenerated into magic and superstition.

Taoism gains its name, not from a founder, but from its main term. "Tao" is an ancient, simple word meaning path or way. But there the simplicity stops; for when one seeks to understand from the ancient literature what Tao is, he

<sup>12</sup> *Psalms of the Brethren*, stanza 104.



finds an unwillingness or inability to define it. The very opening words of the *Tao-Te-King* strike that note:

The Tao that can be expressed is not the eternal Tao:  
The name that can be defined is not the unchanging name.<sup>13</sup>

Yet this indefinable substance, principle, or way is the essence of all things that are; it is the dynamic force that moves in all energy:

There is a thing inherent and natural,  
Which existed before heaven and earth.  
Motionless and fathomless,  
It stands alone and never changes;  
It pervades everywhere and never becomes exhausted;  
It may be regarded as the Mother of the Universe.  
I do not know its name.  
If I am forced to give it a name,  
I call it Tao, and I name it supreme. . . .  
Man follows the laws of earth;  
Earth follows the laws of heaven;  
Heaven follows the laws of Tao;  
Tao follows the laws of its intrinsic nature.<sup>14</sup>

And this is about all that one can say of Tao, as far as words are concerned. Tao is the way of Heaven, the source and sustainer of all; it may have been before God—if there is a God; it is the order of Nature, including man himself. Thus we begin to sense the mystical quality that pervades the conception. Unavoidably we are reminded of the Hindu mystic's refusal to say more than "Neti, neti" with regard to Brahman, the Absolute. The Taoist would agree with him: when you attempt to define Supreme Reality you limit or change it; that which you can put into words is not the reality itself.

Indeed, the Taoist goes out of his way to make the matter confusing. He characterizes Tao as possessing equally and at the same time several contradictory qualities; he employs all the paradoxes at his disposal. Tao is inactive, yet the source of all activity; it is soft and yielding, unassertive, yet it breaks mountains and rules the world; it is empty, yet more full of substance than all else besides. It is not exactly a moral order—at least in the sense of supporting conventional human rules or moral virtues yet is the source of all true virtue:

Tao is the source of all things, the treasure of good men, and  
the sustainer of bad men.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *The Bible of the World*, Robert O. Ballou, ed., Chap. LI, p. 471.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Chap. XXV, p. 481.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Chap. LXII, p. 497.

When the great Tao is lost, spring forth benevolence and  
righteousness.

When wisdom and sagacity arise, there are great hypocrites.<sup>16</sup>

The mystical quality of Taoism is further evidenced by the way in which Tao is to be known. Somewhat in the manner of Ramakrishna, the Taoist scriptures urge men to disregard their complicated learning and realize Supreme Reality within themselves.

Without going out of the door  
One can know the whole world;  
Without peeping out of the window  
One can see the Tao of heaven.  
The further one travels  
The less one knows.  
Therefore the sage knows everything without traveling;  
He names everything without seeing it;  
He accomplishes everything without doing it.<sup>17</sup>

The chief difference in mysticisms at this point would be in the respective points of emphasis. Ramakrishna's mysticism was a strongly emotional one; his visions were achieved by the intensity of longing with which he pursued his goal. Buddhism and Hinduism achieve their sense of calm coolness or serene oneness with Brahman by long, arduous discipline. In Taoism there is no sense of intense emotion or long effort, but a quality of naturalness and spontaneity. There is no climax striven for here, nor any violent cutting of oneself off from sights or sounds by a total concentration on an object or theme, but relaxation and dependence on a natural intuition. It could be almost said that the way of Taoist mysticism is that way of doing what comes naturally; certainly the man who attains serenity will be one who is simple and unaffected.

Yet it is not quite true to suggest that Taoist mysticism is a sheer, spontaneous going back to nature, or a mere lazy indolence; for the Taoist has also his rudimentary discipline. It is not a careful set of rules or set procedure, of course—for he would abhor all regularizing of the spiritual life—but rather a characteristic attitude. The Taoist cherished solitude as essential to the spiritual life. Lao Tse is supposed to have fled into rather inaccessible regions for his latter days, where he might meditate in peace, undisturbed by sightseers and fussy moralists like Confucius. Taoist sages frequently followed his example; they often turned away would-be disciples by rude or paradoxical answers. They seldom possessed much in the way of worldly goods, and were on the whole

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Chap. XVII, p. 477.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Chap. XLVII, p. 490.



mildly ascetic. As a rule they were humble and unassuming—even self-effacing; and very sparing of words.

Nor did Taoists expect violent ecstasies of feeling or great shining visions to come as the result of their way of life. The most that we can find of this sort of quality is very unspectacular—not much more than a hazy sense of uncertainty as to the limits of one's consciousness; or maybe an unsureness as to which of certain experiences is the more real; which dream, and which reality. Chuang Tzu, next most revered to Lao Tse in the Taoist tradition, writes this:

Once upon a time I, Chuang Tze, dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of following my fancies as a butterfly and was unconscious of my individuality as a man. Suddenly, I awakened, and there I lay, myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly dreaming I am a man.<sup>18</sup>

There is also something in Taoism resembling the confidence of the Hindu that he will be absorbed at death into the World Soul, and the Buddhist's joy at the prospect of his release. On the death of his wife Chuang Tzu refused to mourn, because he remembered that she was now become again a part of the natural formlessness of the eternal Tao from which she came, and was therefore as near him as when in bodily form. Much more positive—though it may represent an elaboration by later Taoists—is the following expression of an expectation of future bliss. In an essay entitled "The Wisdom of the Skull" Chuang Tzu is portrayed as having a dream in which a skull, which he had placed under his pillow, speaks to him about existence after death:

Chuang Tze . . . said: "Were I to prevail upon God to allow your body to be born again, and your bones and flesh to be renewed . . . would you be willing?" At this, the skull opened its eyes wide and knitted its brows and said, "How should I cast aside happiness greater than that of a king, and mingle once again in the toils and troubles of mortality?"<sup>19</sup>

Thus is Taoism the mildest and most formless of all mysticisms. There is none of the Buddhist urgency to escape life, nor its carefully worked out discipline of minimal living. There is only a mild form of the strong Hindu yearning to be reabsorbed into the great Oneness from which we are separated by our individuality. There is an easy naturalness of simple living and an attempt to gain a peaceful sense of oneness with the source of all life and being. There is the true mystic tendency to rely upon one's inner resources, to look for essential truth—not in the knowledge of the outer world, but within the heart—and to

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 512.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 541.

depend on intuition rather than reason. There is also the conviction of a oneness or likeness between the essence of man and Supreme Reality, which may be brought to light and fruition by nurture. Yet it is an easy, unforced nurture, and a very vague reality which is finally known. We have here perhaps the natural raw materials of a mysticism, rather than its finished product; and we have also the explanation, in this its unformed quality, as to why Taoism later sought to adopt Buddhist methodology, and finally deteriorated into sheer magic and superstitious worship.

### 5. *Mysticism in Islam*

Islam presents an entirely different context of thought and religious life from either of the patterns we have examined before; it is so different, in fact, that one might almost say that mysticism is not to be expected here—that one should be surprised to find it. For there is nothing vague or pantheistic about Moslem theology; Allah is a decisively personal being whose will has been clearly revealed in the Koran. There is little or nothing in Islamic backgrounds of that prevalently mystical approach to life and religion that characterized the Hindu and Buddhist antecedents of mysticism. The dry, fierce fanaticism of Islam seems to have expressed itself best in the hard, literal, legal structure that Islam early erected and has ever since effectively preserved.

But, even in this unlikely desert, mysticism also had its appearance, and wrote an important chapter in Islamic history. Truth to tell, however, its mysticism was largely imported, and was never hospitably received by most of the Moslem community—nor for long tolerated in its pure form. But this makes the problem all the more interesting. How does mysticism express itself in a context that is highly unfavorable—at least on the surface—to its interpretation of religion?

Mysticism came to Islam via asceticism; or perhaps it would be better to say that the ascetics within the faith prepared the way for the incursion of mystic ideas and practices from without. It is not strange that such should be the pattern of its coming, for the way to mysticism often lies through asceticism. The ascetic cuts himself off from the world by his manner of life and may create by his very austerities unusual states of body and mind that can easily be interpreted mystically. One might thus interpret the Indian Yogin: beginning with measures like breath control and the slowing of the pulse, and proceeding to near-unconsciousness, he finds the ensuing physical and mental states full of metaphysical significance.

Moslem mysticism, indeed, bears on the very surface evidence of its ascetic connections, in the name given to the mystics; they were called "Sufis" or "wearers of a woolen garment." The *suf* was a simple outer garment of coarse



woolen fabric, originally worn by the poor as their ordinary clothing because they could afford no other. It was then affected by some of the ascetics to symbolize their voluntary poverty, and was finally adopted by the mystics as a kind of uniform.

Asceticism arose in Islam about two centuries after the death of Mohammed. In that period Islam had proceeded on a glorious career of world conquest; it had become a world faith, and its caliph, spiritual and political sovereign of many thousands of the faithful, ruled in magnificent splendor. But in the opinion of many rigorists within the ranks—and Islam always has carried within it a deep, recurrent strain of puritanism—this success had brought moral and spiritual laxness. In the name of the pure and primitive faith the ascetics set themselves against the tides of worldliness. Had not the Prophet and his companions dressed and lived simply? Did not one of the first caliphs—a much holier man than any of the recent ones—dress as humbly as a slave?

So it was that in the name of reform, and to achieve a more intense religious life, a growing number of ascetics imposed on themselves a more austere self-denial. One of them writes to a fellow ascetic:

He [the godly man] will abstain even from such things as are lawful and pure, except for such shreds as he needs to bind his loins and clothe his nakedness, and then only the thickest and roughest he can find. He has no trust nor hope save in God; . . . He labours, and exhausts himself and wears out his body for God's sake, so that his eyes are sunken and his ribs stare; and God requites him therefor with increase of intellect and strength of heart, and all the things besides that He has stored up for him in the world to come. Then spurn the world, my brother. . . . Devote thyself to God with a penitent heart, and an undoubting resolve.<sup>20</sup>

Not yet do we have the full-fledged mystical way of life or its theory; but we do have a way of life and a quality of spirit that might well under proper conditions change into mysticism, or allow mystical elements to be grafted on it. For the ascetic has turned from men and the world to a solitary life; he distrusts the body, and reduces his physical needs to the absolute minimum; he seeks to devote himself intensely to God; he would welcome an even greater spiritual warmth and sense of divine reality. A disposition favorable to mysticism was therefore present from within Islam itself; there lacked only the doctrine and techniques.

These proper conditions for the conversion of asceticism into mysticism were shortly forthcoming. For as Islam began to assimilate the various peoples in its new domains to its faith and culture, it could not altogether avoid the influence of their ideas; and indeed the Islam of this period was not averse—in some

<sup>20</sup> A. J. Arberry, *Sufism*, Macmillan, 1950, p. 38.

circles, at least—to such influences. We need not be surprised, therefore, to find that mystical ideas and practices began to make their way into Islam from Greek, Indian, and Christian sources, nor that many of the leaders of the new mysticism were non-Arabian Moslems. Among the ascetics they found those who were ready for their ideas; or—to say it in reverse—the ascetics found in these mystical teachings a warmth of devotion and a theoretical interpretation heretofore lacking in their pattern.

The transition from asceticism to mysticism may be typified by the case of al-Muhasibi (meaning “one who examined himself”), who lived in the 9th century A.D. He was an eminent teacher, and one of the leading Sufi writers. In the autobiographical introduction to his major work he describes his spiritual pilgrimage. He was a searcher for the true way of salvation. He turned successively to the learned doctors of the law, to the learned works themselves, to the teachers of morals, and to the saints. But after working with each of them diligently, he found that either their divisions of opinion confused him or else the standards they set were so hard that they were “a sea wherein the likes of me must needs drown, and which such as I can never explore.” But he goes on to say:

Then God opened unto me a knowledge in which both proof was clear and decision shone, and I had hopes that whoever should draw near to this knowledge and adopt it for his own, would be saved. I therefore saw that it was necessary for me to adopt this knowledge and to practise its ordinances; I believed it in my heart, and embraced it in my mind, and made it the foundation of my faith.<sup>21</sup>

This new knowledge was presumably a direct mystical sense of the truth of the Islamic way—an inner certitude more convincing than any amount of doctrinal disputation. Yet it was still well within orthodox limits.

But new elements were at work in Sufism, not so easily restrained within orthodox bounds. Under outside influences the Sufi began to emphasize some characteristic mystical doctrines. They concerned themselves more and more with the *love* of God; the attainment or experience of that love became an obsessive passion with them. The mystic began to think of himself as the lover of God, longing to be one with Him in ecstasy. A poet wrote these words of passionate longing:

I die, and yet not dies in me  
The ardour of my love for Thee,  
Nor hath Thy Love, my only goal,  
Assuaged the fever of my soul.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49 f.



To Thee alone my spirit cries;  
 In Thee my whole ambition lies,  
 And still Thy Wealth is far above  
 The poverty of my small love. . . .

A fever burns below my heart  
 And ravages my every part;  
 It hath destroyed my strength and stay,  
 And smouldered all my soul away. . . .

Oh then to me Thy Favour give  
 That, so attended, I may live,  
 And overwhelm with ease from Thee  
 The rigour of my poverty.<sup>22</sup>

Not only did the Sufi begin to emphasize the love of God, but the desire to experience it in ecstasy became increasingly the supreme goal of the Sufi way. No lazy, easy harmony with nature could serve in a context as emotionally intense as that of Islam; there must be the climactic mystic realization, in which the sense of individuality is blotted out—much as in Hinduism and Buddhism—and the experiencer engulfed in a sense of unity with God. Indeed, there was perhaps a direct importation from Buddhism at this point in the doctrine of *fana*—this word means literally “passing away,” and is used a few times in the Koran. Sufism found in the word a reference to the passing away of the self into God, now only in short ecstatic periods, but permanently in the life to come. Though it is put in theistic terms, it seems in quality to be much like the Buddhist “going out.”

A definite method of inducing the ecstatic or trance state was likewise developed—though its full development marks the decline of Sufism. It was called *dhikr*, or “recollection.” There were some eleven preparatory steps: which included the ritual purification for prayer, assuming the prayer posture on folded legs, the recitation of numbers of prayers and sacred texts, and an attempt to concentrate all one’s bodily senses and mental powers. As aids to the latter a number of measures suggestive of Yogin technique were prescribed: tightly closing the mouth while pressing the tongue against its roof, drawing a deep breath and holding it. While one holds his breath he meditates, or concentrates on some phrase like the call to prayer: *la ilāh illa Allāh*. He imagines that he is letting the sounds or qualities of these words descend from his brain to the right shoulder blade, from thence to the heart, meanwhile considering the meaning of the words. These syllables then will be pressed against the core of the heart with all the force of the pent-up breath,

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53 f.

until its effect and heat are felt throughout the body. Its heat will burn up all the corrupt particles in the body, while the sound particles will be irradiated by the Light of Majesty. This process is to be repeated twenty-one times, not automatically but reflectively. . . . At the end of his exertions, the commemorator will experience the results of his *dhiḳr*; he will lose all consciousness of being a man and a part of creation, and will be entirely destroyed in the attraction of the Divine Essence.<sup>23</sup>

Obviously something different has now been added to sober, literalistic Moslem orthodoxy; here is a flaming enthusiasm and ecstatic behavior that may lead to extremes of conduct and teachings foreign to the faith. Indeed, such irregularities caused considerable embarrassment and aroused much suspicion. To defend themselves, the Sufi elaborated the doctrine that a man was not responsible in the ordinary sense for what he did when in ecstasy, and that a saint—proved so by his ecstasies—might do some things that convention condemns.

Perhaps in the eyes of many the doctrinal threat was even more serious than any passing irregularities of conduct to which Sufism might lead. Some Sufis began to say that it was not only unnecessary to love Mohammed when one loved God supremely, but that it was impossible; there was no energy left over for such love. They searched the Koran for all sorts of highly poetic and allegorical meanings to fit their mystical interpretations—to the great distress of the orthodox. But worst of all was their threat to the central Moslem teaching about God: that He is a distinct personal being, utterly above and different from men.

The Sufis appeared to be attacking this core doctrine from two angles. A strong flavor of pantheism—the theory that God is not a personal being but a spiritual presence everywhere and in everything—began to seep into their teachings. No longer, for mystic thought, was Allah an inscrutable and personal will, who like a desert sheikh orders now this thing and now that. Rather he was a pervasive essence found in the beauty, order, and power of his world, experienced in the soul of man; he was not apart from his world as creator, but part of it as its substance.

And Sufi teaching appeared to be breaking down the wall of distinction between God and man, which is so near to the heart of Moslem theology. Now the orthodox called Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful—those were Mohammed's favorite words about him. But it was always clearly understood that such compassion and mercy as Allah chose to bestow on his creatures were not merited by them, and were given when and how he would. Man never presumed to question Allah's gifts to him, or his withholding of them; he only received what was sent, with complete submission. He did not think of himself as a companion of God, but as a servant. Though God was nearer to man than

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 131 f.



his jugular artery, no Moslem presumed to construe this as a cosy familiarity of relationship; rather it meant the completeness of God's control of his life, even to the most intimate physical impulse and to the inmost thought.

But the Sufi spoke otherwise. He talked of God as the Beloved and man as his lover—or sometimes the reverse. The Persian mystics took over the love poetry of their day, and used its imagery to express their relation to God—not perhaps in the erotic manner of Indian mysticism, but surely in the tenderest and most human strain. Or else they wrote their own poems of the same sort. One of them, al-Nuri, wrote these stanzas:

So passionate my love is, I do yearn  
To keep His memory constantly in mind;  
But O, the ecstasy with which I burn  
Sears out my thoughts, and strikes my memory blind!

And, marvel upon marvel, ecstasy  
Itself is swept away; now far, now near  
My Lover stands, and all the faculty  
Of memory is swept up in hope and fear.<sup>24</sup>

Obviously, when men begin to speak of God as their "Beloved," and yearn for him in the same way that a lover yearns for his human beloved, or to speak of an ecstasy in which men and God are one in the fullest sense, the distance between God and man and the distinction between creature and creator have been considerably lessened. In true mystic sense man and God may now be considered to be of the same essence—especially if God *is* an essence rather than a person. Their substances may mingle—much in the same way as Christian mystics of this same period spoke of the "deification" of the saint even in this life. Indeed, one of the boldest Sufis used to say, as though he were God: "Glory to Me! How great is My Majesty!"

Such departures from orthodoxy roused the deepest fears of the Moslem community. Many called for the banishment of the Sufis or the suppression of their teaching, even though at this time (12th century A.D.) they were founding their great monastic orders, which have endured down to the present day. It was probably the efforts of the great al-Ghazzali that kept Sufism and orthodoxy from completely severing connections. He began as a Sufi, but became dissatisfied with its disregard of Moslem doctrine and tradition; therefore he outwardly dissociated himself from the movement, yet sought to take its spiritual values into the structure of orthodoxy. He acceded to Sufism's main contention that it is the inner quality of religion that counts—not outward conformity and rite. But he likewise strongly affirmed that we can come into contact with God

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62 f.

only through the means by which He has chosen to reveal Himself: His prophets, and His law; there is no mystic short cut to Him outside these forms. Nor does the soul in any way become God, though it may come to know Him intimately.

Thus al-Ghazzali—and Islam with him—rejected in the end the mystic way, but not without that mysticism having left its mark. Its fiery quality of devoted love has ever since burned steadily—though not so extravagantly—in much of orthodoxy. The following words, though written by a mystic antedating al-Ghazzali, are those of a moderate sort which might be used without offense by a Moslem today, as descriptive of a true and devout believer:

. . . the love of God lurks deeply hidden in his inmost heart, cleaving to his mind, and never leaving it. Then his soul is joyfully busied with secret converse with God, and passionate study, and ardent talk. So he is, eating and drinking, sleeping (and waking), in all his motions: for when God's nearness takes possession of a man's heart, it overwhelms all else. . . . Thereafter that man continues, going or coming, taking or giving: there prevails in him the purpose which has ruled his mind, namely, the love of God and His nearness.<sup>25</sup>

#### 6. *Christian Mysticism*

The career of mysticism in Christianity furnishes both contrast and comparison to its career in the other religions we have described. Christianity on the whole is considerably less mystical than Buddhism or Hinduism; from its Jewish heritage it has a strong sense of the reality of this world, and of the distinctly personal quality of Divine Reality. There is besides a strongly ethical and practical instinct, which has expressed itself in creeds, codes, and institutions. These elements have tended to make Christianity more generally non-mystical in its main drive—even like Judaism and Islam. Its spokesmen have more frequently been of the prophetic order than of the mystical; and its mysticism for the most part came to it from without.

Yet in some respects it lent itself more easily to mystical interpretation than did Islam; its emotional tone was softer and warmer, its monotheism less fanatical and severe. There were also, almost from the beginning, more abundant symbolical materials for mystical use in its tradition; though—as both Buddhist and Moslem mystics bear witness—mysticism *may* develop largely without such symbolism. And, finally, the Greek tradition (from which a certain amount of mystical influence came into Islam) to enter Christendom, did not have to cross the barriers imposed by a different nationality and religious faith; it had been closely related to Christianity from the latter's earliest days, though its mystical influence came later.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.



The first impetus to Christian mysticism came from without. Some of Plato's later disciples gave his doctrine of ideas (philosophic universals) a mystical turn in the Neo-Platonic philosophies. Plotinus (A.D. 205-270), a Greek of Alexandria, taught that there was a supersensible world of ideas that achieved its unity in the Absolute God or "Unconditioned One," who could be known only by contemplation and ecstasy; the visible world of our experience was an "emanation" from this Unconditioned One—and of course much less real.

Plotinus' influence was indirect, however, entering the Christian stream through later students of Neo-Platonism, like St. Augustine (A.D. 354-430), and especially through Pseudo-Dionysius. The latter was probably a Syrian Christian monk of the 4th century who wrote under the New Testament name of Dionysius (a convert of St. Paul's) to give his teachings authority and the flavor of antiquity. He injected Plotinus directly into the stream of Christian theology, calling God the Father "the Unity which unifies every unity" or the "super-essential Essence" from whom all things flow (emanate) and to whom they will return. Such a God can be known directly through mystical powers possessed by the higher portion of the human soul (the lower portion in its weakness may still need to use symbols of church rite and Holy Scripture). The infinite essence of God can be described only by negatives; He can be known only as we strip ourselves of all sense of personal identity, our thought of all distinctions of any kind, and rise in ecstasy to union with Him. This union is to be achieved by a long and complex series of progressive physical disciplines and meditative techniques (the "ladder" of one's thoughts), which need not detain us here; for it is the thought pattern, rather than the detailed technique, which Plotinus transmitted to Christianity. Here is his description of the ascension of thought to God:

He who in perfect rest rises from the body and attains the highest light, comes forth in his own proper form. This is the immortal soul. The ascent is by the ladder of one's thoughts. To know God, one must first know one's own spirit in its purity, unspotted by thought. The soul is hidden behind the veil of thought, and only when thought is worn off, becomes visible to itself. This stage is called knowledge of the soul.

Next is realized knowledge of God, who rises from the bosom of the soul. This is the end of progress; differentiation between self and others has ceased. All the world of thought and senses is melted into an ocean without waves or current. . . . Then the formless Being of the Deity is seen.<sup>26</sup>

This description of the manner of attaining to knowledge of the Supreme Reality is essentially that of Hinduism and Buddhism, we may note in passing, though the language—as we might expect—varies somewhat. One "rises from

<sup>26</sup> W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, pp. 112 f.

the body," abstracts himself from all outer distractions, and finally arrives at a formless, characterless sense of unity with a greater Reality, which blots out all thought and sense of individuality. This pattern would seem to have little to do with Christian love and loyalty to a distinctly personal God Who was revealed in Christ; and indeed it was some time before it achieved its full expression in Christianity. But the Dionysian stream of influence wound its devious way from Greek Christianity into Roman Catholicism, and there gained distinctive expression among the German mystics of the 14th century.

#### a. *Meister Eckhart*

Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), the greatest of the German mystics, was a scholar and preacher of the Dominican Order in central Germany; he also did considerable teaching in the German Rhineland and was widely influential throughout central Europe. He inherited many germinal thoughts directly from Dionysius, but also made his own original speculations. His hope was to find a philosophical basis for Church doctrines that could at the same time stimulate a piety more vital than that which was current in the church life of his day. A whole group of mystics and devout Church leaders regarded him as their spiritual father; yet he lived his latter years under the cloud of the Church's official disapproval, and his writings were formally condemned by Rome two years after his death.

Eckhart's doctrine of God is the distinctive part of his teaching and the root of his mysticism—or should we say that his mysticism produced his doctrine of God? He tried to make Dionysius' mystical concept of the formlessness of ultimate Reality fit into the Christian theological pattern, to the considerable alteration of the latter; it was this feature that earned the charges of pantheism leveled against him by Rome.

Eckhart divided the being of God into two: there is the *Godhead*, the ground of all being, an infinite essence which can be qualified only as "Darkness" and "Formlessness." About the Godhead we can know nothing in any ordinary intellectual sense; He can be apprehended only by mystical techniques. Then there is *God*, the Christian God of the Trinity, the Creator, and a personal being Who can be described as good, powerful, loving, wise, and the like. This is the God of Christian doctrine, with Whom we deal in our church rituals and ordinary devotional exercises; it is this God—or aspect of His being—that is in nature; He is, so to speak, the lower part of the Godhead. Eckhart was indeed rather extreme in his language here. "Nature is the lower part of the Godhead," he writes; and again, "Before creation, God was not God."<sup>27</sup> This, of course, sounds dangerously like saying that the Christian God is not the

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.



ultimate reality, that He came into being with the world and is perhaps identical with that world. This pantheistic tinge is opposed to the basic Judeo-Christian thought of God as above and superior to His world.

For Eckhart there was also a corresponding division within the human soul. There is a higher part to the soul, a "ground of the soul," which is related to the operating personality we know in the same way that the Godhead is related to God. At the "apex" of the mind, said Eckhart, there is a "Divine spark" that is like the Godhead—is indeed of the same essence with the Godhead, not merely like Him. Thus does he describe this "spark" or "ground of the soul":

There is in the soul something which is above the soul, Divine, simple, a pure nothing; rather nameless than named, rather unknown than known. . . . Sometimes I have called it a power, sometimes an uncreated light, and sometimes a Divine spark. It is absolute and free from all names and all forms, just as God is free and absolute in Himself. It is higher than knowledge, higher than love. . . . For in all these there is still *distinction*. In this power God doth blossom and flourish with all his Godhead. . . . [This power] rests satisfied neither with the Father, nor with the Son, nor with the Holy Ghost. . . . It is satisfied only with the superessential essence. It is determined to enter into the simple Ground, the still Waste, the Unity where no man dwelleth.<sup>28</sup>

Obviously, for Eckhart, the mystic ecstasy joins the Divine spark in the human soul with the Godhead of God. Indeed, Eckhart is very explicit in suggesting that no approach to God through mere historical religious forms or theology is what he seeks; no mere knowledge of God as seen in the life of Christ is sufficient. He seldom refers to the earthly life of Christ, in fact, save to find mystical symbolisms in his words and deeds. He looks with scant enthusiasm on the so-popular "imitation of Christ," under which title a disciple of his produced a book in the next century; that is the "way of manhood," the way in which the ordinary Christian who uses only the lower part of his soul may serve God. But for the mystic only one thing will satisfy: a direct union of his higher soul with the highest element of God—that is, the formless Godhead. It may be said that Eckhart tries to maintain a Christian flavor by insisting that the soul in union with the Godhead does not lose its identity (as Dionysius and Oriental mysticism suggest) but remains an individual entity. Yet he has very clearly forsaken the Christian ground on which "union" with God is thought of as "communion"—that is, moral and spiritual fellowship with God and likeness to Him, not absorption in Him. The "individual" who remains over against God in ecstasy is no longer a person or soul, but thoughtless, formless mystical substance.

One can understand the hostility of the Church to Eckhart; here was a dan-

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 157 f.

gerous dilution of the Christian doctrine of God. And, perhaps more to the point, here was an implicit by-passing of all the intellectual, institutional, and sacramental structures of medieval Catholicism. To be sure, Eckhart did not exactly say that such means were not valid; but he did say that for the mystic there was a more direct and effective route to God. He implied that ordinary Christians who played about with ordinary church forms of devotion never really came to the essential God—that is, the Godhead—but dealt with His lesser aspects. We see here some of the same elements that took a slightly different form among Protestant reformers two centuries later: the emphasis on direct access to God, without the intermediary agencies of church, priest, sacraments, or petitions to the saints. Though the Reformers rejected the purely mystical part of Eckhart's teaching as a dangerous enthusiasm, he can be said to have importantly contributed to the ground swell of spiritual unrest and dissatisfaction with merely formal religion that finally resulted in the Protestant revolt, and to have deeply influenced many of the Protestant pietists of later centuries.

Within the Catholic Church itself Eckhart was tremendously influential, even though his ecclesiastical status was dubious. Several well-known mystics were his disciples; John Ruysbroeck of Flanders, Henry Suso and John Tauler of Germany, all acknowledged his inspiration. The mystical classic *Theologia Germanica* came directly out of his circle. Gerhard Groot, founder of the Brothers of the Common Life, was Ruysbroeck's disciple. Thomas à Kempis wrote his *On the Imitation of Christ* a century later mainly under Eckhart's inspiration, though the latter would have viewed the work with limited enthusiasm. There was also Nicolas of Cusa, and many others less well-known.

We may well ask whether anything significant has happened, through Eckhart and his disciples, to the pattern of Neo-Platonic mysticism that had wandered into the Judeo-Christian tradition through Plotinus and Dionysius. Has it been greatly altered to suit the Christian pattern of thought and life? Has there been a true grafting of the two substances? The answer seems to be that essentially this Greek mysticism remains unaltered. True, some of its elements have been left behind: namely, the subtleties of the stages of emanation of spiritual power from God, the technical distinctions made by Dionysius among the steps of the ladder of the mind which leads to God, and the long catalogue of virtues and spiritual qualities. And there is less emphasis on the shutting out of the world and the loss of the self in God. Yet the basic Oriental mystic features remain: one turns away from the world of events and persons; he distrusts the body; the self-consciousness of the individual is stripped away in ecstasy; and the God Who is known thereby is scarcely the personal Christian God, but an indefinable Essence. These elements have indeed been given new names from the Christian context but their substance is Greek-Oriental.



b. *Santa Teresa*

But there was another type of mysticism in the Roman Catholic Church of a more generally orthodox variety. It was found largely in the Latin countries, but must not be thought of as a purely sectional development or as a distinct movement; it was rather only another and somewhat different current in the generally mystical life of medieval piety. There was, in fact, considerable in common between the German and Latin groups; many of the Latin mystics were familiar with Dionysius and his Neo-Platonism, and the later ones among them were also familiar with Eckhart and his followers. But on the whole the Latin variety of mysticism was a tamer, more housebroken sort. It was devotional and practical rather than speculative; it was emotionally intense rather than technically adept.

It was also more "Christian," in that it drew more heavily for its themes on Christian tradition than did Germanic mysticism. We might say that from these non-Christian sources Latin mysticism gained the basic conviction of the *possibility* of a direct mystical experience of the realities of the faith—and perhaps an occasional hint as to method; but that it was equally convinced that the main content of that experience lay almost entirely within the orthodox Christian teaching. Of most of them we could say—as Inge says of St. Teresa and her pupil, St. John of the Cross:

The inner light which they sought was not an illumination of the intellect in its search for truth, but a consuming fire to burn up all earthly passions and desires. Faith presented them with no problems; all such questions had been settled by Holy Church. They were ascetics first and Church Reformers next.<sup>29</sup>

This type of mysticism flowed into Latin Christianity from Egyptian Christian sources, which were perhaps more importantly influential in it than either Greek or German sources. When St. Benedict founded his order of monks in the early 6th century and gave them his rule, he drew from the works of John Cassian, an Egyptian monk. This rule, sober and practical but intensely devout, encouraged the mystical life within the order. But it is no wild or free-lance mysticism we have here; it is an enthusiasm carefully harnessed to practical duties, steadfastly held to Christian themes for its meditations, and rigidly contained within the structure of the Church. The mystical vision of God is to be the crown of a faithful life of loyal devotion to the Church, and the product of a rigid Christian moral and spiritual discipline—not a short cut to the secret knowledge of a mysterious Godhead.

The Benedictine Rule, with its "built-in" mystical quality, became the basic pattern for most of the powerful monastic orders of the medieval period. Its form and treatment of mysticism became the official Roman interpretation of

<sup>29</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 217 f.

it, so to speak: a regulated mysticism solidly within the Church structure and firmly under its control. St. Bruno, St. Anselm, St. Hildegard, Joachim of Flora, and Bernard of Clairvaux were all Benedictines. Bernard of Clairvaux—some of whose hymns may be found even in Protestant hymnals today—is an outstanding example of what this type of mysticism sought to achieve: he was an eloquent preacher, a prolific author, a staunch defender of the faith, an able church administrator, and a devout mystic, all at the same time.

In this general stream of orthodox monastic mysticism stands Santa Teresa, the well-known Spanish mystic of the Counter-Reformation, who lived from 1515 to 1582. She represents the Church's answer to the eccentric, speculative mysticism of the German mystics and the ecclesiastically disintegrating enthusiasms of the Reformation; for she was an intensely orthodox and valiant champion of the Church's faith, whose orthodoxy was invigorated by the energy of the mystical vision. To be sure, she was accepted somewhat cautiously by the Church; on one or two occasions she narrowly escaped the attention of the Inquisition, and was finally canonized because of her devout life rather than her orthodox teachings—for even a captive mysticism does not easily conform to orthodoxy.

Teresa entered a convent at the age of 16, and for the next twenty-five years led the usual life of ascetic discipline expected of the Spanish nun. She suffered two or three periods of ill health, but these seem to have been well past when, in her 41st year, she began to believe she was hearing "locutions" in her prayers—(a locution is not precisely an audible voice—not, at least, in the physical sense—but definite words or impressions vividly and indelibly impressed on the inner consciousness). Perhaps it was reading the *Confessions* of Augustine—that part where he tells of hearing the voice in the garden bidding him take up the Scriptures and read—that initiated the visions of Teresa; at least she describes that reading as a "turning point" in her life, as though she were being especially spoken to by Augustine's words, and shortly afterward began to hear locutions and see visions. Thus she reports her first such experience:

So I spent the greater part of one whole day in prayer; and then, beseeching the Lord that He would help me please Him in everything, I began the hymn [*Veni, Creator*]. While I was reciting it, there came to me a transport so sudden that it almost carried me away: I could make no mistake about this, so clear was it. This was the first time the Lord had granted me the favour of any kind of rapture. I heard these words; "I will have thee converse now, not with men, but with angels." This simply amazed me, for my soul was greatly moved and the words were spoken to me in the depths of the spirit.<sup>30</sup>

In a later and more analytical mood, when she has had long experience in

<sup>30</sup> *The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, E. Allison Peers, trans., Sheed & Ward, 1949, Vol. I, Chap. XXIV of "The Life," p. 155.



locutions and visions, Teresa tells us that she thinks the "voice" speaks to her a little after the supreme moment of ecstasy is past. There is first the long preparation of prayer—though sometimes the ecstasy comes very suddenly and unpredictably; then the ecstasy of union with God, in which the person becomes unconscious of the outer world for a time—for as long as six hours sometimes in Teresa's case, her friends reported to her; and finally, when the peak is passed, in the after stillness, comes the voice. She had no sense of making these words up herself, because they came without effort; they seemed unlike anything she had known before; and they impressed themselves indelibly and clearly to their last syllable on her mind, even though her faculties themselves seemed disorganized.

Teresa was troubled and mystified by such visions. How could such favors be granted to *her*, a very humble nun, when more learned and pious people never had them? Were they truly from God, or from Satan? For several days she avoided both communion and utterly solitary prayer, and talked with friends and confessor about the matter. They were all against her, suggesting to her that she had been imagining things, or had been deceived of Satan. Yet the locutions would not stop, but rather continued coming to her in ever more abundant measure.

After some two years of such experiences, "during the whole of which time both other people and myself were continually praying . . . that the Lord would either lead me by another way or make plain the truth," the following experience came to her:

I was at prayer on a festival of the glorious Saint Peter when I saw Christ at my side—or, to put it better, I was conscious of Him, for neither with the eyes of the body nor with those of the soul did I see anything. I thought He was quite close to me and I saw that it was He Who, as I thought, was speaking to me. Being completely ignorant that visions of this kind could occur, I was at first very much afraid, and did nothing but weep, though, as soon as He addressed a single word to reassure me, I became quiet again, as I had been before, and was quite happy and free from fear.<sup>31</sup>

Greatly troubled, she went to her confessor, who asked her whether she could be sure that it was Christ if she did not "see" him. She assured him that she knew it was Christ, because he had spoken to her as one may speak in the dark and be identified without being seen; even without direct words, she was sure it was he, because of the vivid and indelible impression his presence made; she could no more doubt it than the evidence of her eyes. Convinced, therefore, that the Lord had been present to her, she gave herself for several more days to

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

prayer, to see whether he would clarify the matter for her. And then occurred her first "visual" ecstasy:

One day, when I was at prayer, the Lord was pleased to reveal to me nothing but His hands, the beauty of which was so great as to be indescribable. . . . A few days later I also saw that Divine face, which seemed to leave me completely absorbed.<sup>32</sup>

From this time on visions become frequent in Teresa's life. Some time later she saw Jesus' resurrection body "in very great beauty and majesty," suffused with a "soft whiteness and an infused radiance which, without wearying the eyes, causes them the greatest delight."<sup>33</sup> Nearly always, she reported, Christ appeared to her in his resurrection body, though occasionally he showed her his wounds, or himself as bearing his cross, to strengthen her for special trials. And on one occasion

. . . when I was holding in my hand the cross of a rosary, He put out His own hand and took it from me, and, when He gave it back to me, it had become four large stones, much more precious than diamonds. . . . On the cross, with exquisite workmanship, were portrayed the five wounds.<sup>34</sup>

Now and again there were minor disappointments, as when she tried to see the color of the eyes of Jesus, and was unable to because the vision seemed to fade away. But on the whole the visions were highly satisfactory, and made a deep impression upon her. Here is the final account of a repeated one, and its effect:

It pleased the Lord that I should sometimes see the following vision. I would see beside me, on my left hand, an angel in bodily form. . . . He was not tall, but short, and very beautiful, his face so aflame that he appeared to be one of the highest types of angel who seem to be all afire. . . . In his hands I saw a long golden spear and at the end of the iron tip I seemed to see a point of fire. With this he seemed to pierce my heart several times so that it penetrated to my entrails. When he drew it out, I thought he was drawing them out with it and he left me completely afire with a great love for God. The pain was so sharp that it made me utter several moans; and so excessive was the sweetness caused by this intense pain that one can never wish to lose it, nor will one's soul be content with anything but God. . . . During the days that this continued, I went about as if in a stupor. I had no wish to see or speak with anyone, but only to hug my pain, which caused me greater bliss than any that can come from the whole of creation.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 178 f.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 189 f.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 192 f.



Teresa never developed any outstanding mystical theory, though her disciple, John of the Cross, did, and was put in prison for his pains. Nor did she develop a mystical technique of any special quality beyond what we have indicated, namely, intensive prayer and concentration of attention on pious themes, objects, or pictures. She does very suggestively outline the four kinds or stages of prayer, which roughly sketch the mystical progress:

Our soul is like a garden, rough and unfruitful, out of which God plucks the weeds, and plants flowers, which we have to water by prayer. There are four ways of doing this—First, by drawing the water from a well; this is the earliest and most laborious process. Secondly, by a waterwheel which has its rim hung with little buckets. Third, by causing a stream to flow through it. Fourth, by rain from heaven.<sup>36</sup>

These stages of prayer are ordinary prayer, the prayer of quiet, the prayer of partial suspension of the faculties, and the prayer of total suspension or quiescence of all the faculties. The last is also the prayer of union in which God and the soul are one, which Teresa believed she had often experienced, and in which God came to her soul like the abundant rain.

During the course of her visions Teresa also evolved something of an evaluative technique to separate the wheat from the chaff. While the vision is at its height it is impossible to doubt its veracity, she says; but afterward one can observe its effects. Does it leave an indelible impression on the soul, affecting its disposition, strengthening it for trials? then it is probably of God. What ineffectively passes away or is lost to memory is probably of the devil, or else the creation of one's own mind. In some few cases, where positively bad effects followed from her visions, Teresa was sure that they were of Satan, and besides was warned of God that such was the case. Then there were those little prophecies that came to her in her ecstasies concerning the success of some proposed enterprise on which she had set her heart, even though many grave obstacles stood in the way of its realization. But if the vision said that she would succeed, she usually did. And, finally, Teresa remained always in close touch with her confessors, priests of the Church—though sometimes she inwardly chafed at their discipline.

With these visions Teresa was chiefly concerned for some ten years, and, at the insistence of her superiors, wrote an account of them in her *Life*; for by that time they had been accepted as authentically mystical. Then for the next twenty years—indeed till the end of her life—Teresa entered into a life of practical activity. She became the moving spirit in the founding and establishing of Discalced (barefoot) Carmelite convents and monasteries. The aim of these extremely ascetic institutions was to revive the primitive glory of the Church

<sup>36</sup> Inge, *op. cit.*, pp. 220 f.

in Spain and to counteract Reformation heresies. Over a certain amount of official opposition, Teresa was able to establish nearly twoscore institutions and systematically visit them. She also wrote a history of the Foundations (*i.e.*, monasteries) she had helped establish, and two works on the spiritual life, *Way of Perfection*, and *Interior Castle*. Forty years after her death she was canonized (made an official saint of the Church, who may be venerated by Catholics) by Gregory XV, though her writings have never been made official doctrine.

### 7. *Evaluation*

We have now briefly described the mystic way of salvation as it took concrete form in four widely different religious and cultural contexts: the Hindu-Buddhist of India, the Taoist of China, the Islamic of the Middle East, and the Christian in Europe. It remains to evaluate our findings. What are the main tendencies of mysticism as it operates in the religious context? Does it suffer from any distortions or lopsidedness of emphasis? Are there major weaknesses within it? And what seems to be its value for religion?

The first thing to be observed about mysticism is its *individualism*; mysticism is a lonely way—the loneliest of all the ways. The way of works draws believers together in the formation of creedal statements, the following of a common pattern of life, and the creation of institutions. The devotionalist, though feeling strong emotion as a personal religious experience in his own inner heart and sometimes being a solitary soul to boot, more often than not is the member of a fellowship in whose enjoyment his emotion comes to highest peak; witness the mass revival meeting. But the mystic way is a solitary one, which must be traveled by a person for himself and with himself alone; no one else can realize God for him, and his claims so to realize God may set him apart from his fellows. To achieve his vision he must usually separate himself physically from his fellows; the mystic is a lonely man in forest, desert waste, or private cell, seeking to make his solitary way to God. One of the mystics in a classic phrase has called this way “the flight of the alone to the Alone”—that is, the search of a man’s most secret inaccessible self for the most secret and inaccessible depth of God’s reality.

This basic individualism of the mystic way has had several important results. Obviously it means that the mystic is not strong on fellowship; like the artist, he is intent on realizing and expressing his own special experience. Perhaps it would not be unjust to say that he is incapable of human fellowship as a mystic; or at least we may say that he is on the whole asocial and anti-institutional. To be sure, some mystics have joined in fellowship, but that joining has usually been on other grounds than mystical, and rather grudgingly entered into. For instance, Buddhists were at first solitary forest dwellers, but gradually drew together in colonies of neighboring but separate huts where each might pursue



his solitary way of meditation undisturbed; thus, rather left-handedly, some practical advantages of community life were secured. It is notable that communal life grew stronger in Buddhism as the hope of immediate salvation (*i.e.*, ecstatic enlightenment) grew weaker. In Christianity and Islam likewise there was a gradual formation of monastic communities among the solitary saints in order to insure protection from physical danger, the procurement of the minimum necessities in the areas of food and clothing, and—in the case of Christianity—to regulate more carefully the ascetic-mystic life.

Yet even when incorporated into an organized religious life the mystic is seldom an organizational stalwart. He may be a practical administrator, as was St. Bernard, or an organizer of new orders, like Teresa, or the founder of a brotherhood, like Buddha; but either this takes place during the times when he is less mystically inclined (Teresa), when he is firmly anchored to a specific doctrinal structure (Bernard), or else the "organization" is a simple teacher-disciple relation (Buddha). From the organizational point of view the mystic is simply not to be trusted very far, for he may easily get out of hand; he is a congenital eccentric. He is somewhat of a rebel by definition; for his vision—his very own private vision—of religious realities is his supreme authority, no matter how many confessors or spiritual directors he may have or how orthodox his intentions may be. He is seeking his own personal assurance of the truth of traditional doctrines, and is not satisfied with the assurances given by mere institutional authority. Therefore he may always be expected to deviate from the norm—by coining new words and doctrines, or by-passing the formal organized life and ritual of the religious group. Like an erratic genius, he cannot be harnessed to commonplace tasks or held to conventional patterns.

Obviously, also, mysticism is not a way of salvation for common consumption, but a semisecret, highly *aristocratic* way. The masses cannot follow this way, save perhaps in a highly diluted form, or by what mystics would regard as its weak and perhaps false imitation, namely, intense emotionalism; it can never be the pattern of life for the whole group. For either the discipline involved is so long-continued and severe that most cannot endure it, or else the spiritual capacities called for are of such a special kind that only a few possess them. This has been the mystical flavor wherever a distinctive mysticism has appeared; and sometimes it has been linked with a species of spiritual snobbery, a rather supercilious looking down the nose at those who follow more humble ways of salvation. Thus Hinduism proclaimed that only Brahmins had progressed far enough up the ladder of Karma to be capable of salvation by knowledge, and they alone were allowed the leisure for it. Teresa looked on her visions as a special favor granted to her—a kind of promotion over the heads of her supposed spiritual superiors to a more intimate relationship to God. The Taoist

mystic called himself a sage. And within most religions the mystics have lived as an elite within a monastic order, a small minority within a minority, aristocrats of the aristocrats.

But there is a curious *dependence* of the mystic—for all the apparent strength of his solitary genius—on the tradition and institution. Sometimes he appears to be more original than he is, because he follows the tradition of mysticism rather than the orthodox one. Thus it was with Eckhart: in large part he followed the doctrines of Dionysius, who followed Plotinus. Though he did show a considerable genius of expression, the primary contrast is between the tradition of Dionysius-Plotinus and the main Catholic tradition. In fact, many medieval Christian mystics rather slavishly followed the pattern set by Dionysius. The very most that we can grant the professional mystics is a poetic genius of statement, not an original creativity of thought.

It is also true that the mystic needs the protection of the institution, no matter how much he may affect to despise it. The very cell in which he meditates is an institutional product, and is a symbol of the kind of support it gives his effort. The institution provides him with the leisure to carry on his spiritual quest by supporting him physically without his own efforts, by protecting him from the attention of the crowds, and by sparing him the vicissitudes of practical life in general. It builds for him a protective shell of reverence, or an actual wall of brick and stone, to nourish the delicacy of his spiritual genius and give it opportunity to flourish. In Hinduism the caste structure and the general willingness of the populace to support the holy man's meager needs provides this institutional support for the mystic; in Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity it was the monastery and Church order. And though it may be possible for a "practical" mystic to exist—one who mingles in the world like his fellows without the strong institutional wall about him—such mystics have not been greatly in evidence. Protestantism sought to take spiritual life out of the cloister and democratically make every man's access to God and knowledge of Him direct, *à la* mysticism. Whatever our verdict about the ultimate value of its way, it has not been notably prolific in the production of mysticism; it has been, rather, a practical religion of works with frequent strong overtones of emotional fervor.

The basic reason for the mystic's dependence on organization and tradition is to be found in his tendency to *subjectivism*. How else could it be? If one expects to find the essence of truth through his own private vision; if the certainty which is his is primarily the certitude of his own inner impressions, rather than the clarity of a rational judgment open to all men's judgment; if he seeks for a present and immediate knowledge of the truth, rather than waiting for the slow judgment of history and verdict of reason—how can he avoid a certain quality of being shut in on himself? If no one else can rightly judge the truth



he has experienced, and that truth cannot well be expressed in mere words, how can he ever satisfactorily communicate with others by ordinary intellectual and social means? So it is that though some mystics have been theologians, and though all mysticism views itself as a knowledge technique, it is often anti-intellectualist. Its truth comes through a superintellectual vision, in which thinking and thought forms are done away; it is realized, not rationalized. It is not happy to be involved in disputation, but prefers to have others listen to its account of truth; it is not so much interested in rational verification of its truth, as in the believer's personal attitude toward it. Hence mysticism does not often produce a body of doctrine, but rather a flexible technique for spiritualizing a wide variety of religious contexts. For its actual content of doctrine and pattern of life it borrows heavily from environing tradition and institution.

The individualism and subjectivism of the mystic affect another aspect of the case—namely, the moral; we may say that mysticism is *esthetic rather than ethical*. This is, of course, inevitable in the nature of the case, for the goal of mysticism is the achievement of a unifying ecstasy or feeling-state, in which all distinctions of every sort are done away. (To be sure the mystic claims to rise above both feeling and intellect in his supreme moment, but what he reports is a feeling-tone rather than an idea.) And the concepts of good and bad, right and wrong, are distinctions having a certain intellectual content. Hence it is that mystic language is full of suggestions that the mystic rises above distinctions of good and evil. The trance state knows nothing of such distinctions—only the sense of union with the ultimate reality; and that ultimate reality is too wonderfully different from ordinary realities to be characterized in any way—even as good or just. This is not to say that mystics are ordinarily immoral libertines, for the great mystical systems have usually begun with a course of systematically strenuous moral discipline as a prerequisite to the final spiritual ascent above good and evil. And they have also nearly always thought of themselves not as antimoral, but as providing *plus* values to morality, which are usually lost in any mere process of religious rule-keeping. Yet the main interest of pure mysticism is esthetic rather than ethical; and it values the strongly felt rather than the rationally correct or the morally right. Hence mysticism often plays with erotic imagery in its language, and occasionally produces very unconventional behavior. Again, it must depend on the doctrinal and institutional context to provide its actual moral content.

It may be questioned, indeed, whether mysticism is at all a way of thought, or productive of a pattern of conduct in its own right. It may be only a psychological attitude that can be taken toward almost any doctrine, and a spirit that may infuse almost any pattern of living. Consider its theology. Strictly speaking, it has no doctrine of God; it is questionable whether it needs any doctrine

of God, for we find mysticism in all kinds of religious contexts: Taoist "universalism" or naturalism; atheistic Buddhism; breath-controlled Yoga, with no inherent theology at all; Hindu Vedantism, which teaches that God is within the human soul, *i.e.*, we are God; Teresa's Christ-mysticism; and rigorously theistic Islam. True it is that in all these there is a tendency to an impersonal or pantheistic conception of supreme reality; but even this is a witness to its non-intellectual quality. For the category of impersonal substance is the most elastically indefinite way of thinking about anything that could be conceived. It says practically nothing but that God is not personal, and therefore not in any sense definitely definable.

And whence comes such love of blankness—such assurance that Reality is thus indefinable? Perhaps from the psychological quality of that trance state, which has cut itself off from the outer world in all its forms—history, physical reality, sense, sight, sound, other persons—and become a pure state of personal consciousness without anything to be conscious of. Pure and undefiled mysticism must be ready to defend itself against the charge of being a pure subjectivism, which seeks to make God in the image of its own feeling-states, and which has no pattern of life to recommend but the one it finds in its own environment.

Is there, then, nothing good to be said about mysticism? Much in quality, if not in quantity; particularly is this true of mysticism in a wider sense than the narrowly "professional" development we have been criticizing. This wider mysticism is a continual witness to the depth factor in human life and experience; it is a reminder that not all of reality can be included in patterns of thought or abstract rules of conduct. It is a refusal to limit human knowing to the pure rules of logic and cast out as unimportant the feeling overtones of all our knowing. It would say that appreciation as well as reason, the artist as well as the professor, the poet as well as the logician, may speak meaningfully about the world. It would insist that the condition and state of the person who knows, the subjective factor, has something important to do with what is known "out there" beyond him.

And mysticism in religion has been also a call to richer and more fruitful religious living. It breaks out in constant protest against the arid dryness of rule-keeping, against going through the motions of piety and calling it religion, and seeks to leaven the deadening weight of institutional life with the power of the spirit. It is the expression of individualism in religion as opposed to the regimentation of creeds, codes, and organization, and a constant reminder that religious institutions are formed to serve man rather than man to serve institutions. Even though it may not have produced new structures of thought, it has immeasurably enriched the vocabulary of religion; its language of devotion and



poetry of aspiration have indeed become the common spiritual heritage of most faiths—to their own immense stimulation. Thus, though the masses may not have entered the way of mysticism or even be capable of entrance, the influence of that way has left no major faith of mankind unaffected.

The indebtedness of institutional life to mysticism should also be noted. Though mysticism may well be a dubious quantity from the administrative point of view, its services to religious organizations are tremendous. Its inner fire is often that which drives the institution forward—whether by action or reaction. Hinduism was forced by the Buddhist simplification of the religious life to lessen its emphasis on the legalism and sacramentalism that had characterized it, and to incorporate in its own faith many a Buddhist “reform.” So, we also noted, Moslem orthodoxy, in the person and thought of al-Ghazzali, took errant Sufism into its structure by accepting its major emphasis on the worth of the inner life of faith and vision. Though Catholicism disciplined many of its mystics and refused to accept their extreme doctrines, these same mystics provided the fire and life of many a medieval Church order; and many mystics were generations later included in its official lists of the holy as the brightest stars in the orthodox ecclesiastical firmament. Indeed, both Catholicism and Protestantism look back frequently and reverently to the mystic saints of the Christian tradition—Catholicism with a nostalgic longing that would gladly reproduce some such splendor today, Protestantism with something of uncomprehending awe and admiration.

Finally, let it be observed that mysticism poses a question no religion can successfully ignore: *How shall a man know his God?* This is indeed the fundamental claim of all religions—that they lead men by some means to such knowledge. Yet many of the rank and file in religion find no such vitalizing knowledge within the ordinary practices and institutions of their faith. Their contact with the more-than-human reality they profess to serve is at most very indirect; hence arise the futile practices of purely formal religion. The mystic represents the individual man of faith who would demand of religion that it make good its basic claim to existence and authenticate its right to authority over the human spirit. Religions therefore deny the mystic demand and suppress the mystic impulse at the peril of their own great impoverishment and the ultimate falsification of their own basic claim. If they would avoid the excesses and narrowness of concentrated and specialized mysticism, they must provide a satisfactory equivalent to it in their ordinary life, in a vivid sense of the reality of God, mediated through their rites and their fellowships to the rank and file of their devotees.

## PART IV

### RELIGION AS QUESTION AND ANSWER



# SECTION I

## QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING

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### *Chapter XXIV*

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#### THE LIFE OF THE MIND IN RELIGION

##### 1. *Questions and Answers*

Two of the major aspects of religion have now been considered. We have observed that religion is basically involved in human social life; it plays a leading role in many types of natural human groupings, and also creates its own distinctive social forms. This group life has ministered to man's social needs, and has provided a means for the transmission of his varied religious traditions. Such social values have been more or less incidental to religion's main interest, however, for it has been concerned primarily with man's salvation. The manner in which it has conceived salvation has varied considerably with the cultural context; but especially in its more developed forms religion has elaborated the three great patterns of salvation by works, devotion, and mystical knowledge. Each of the world's major religions has all these elements in its structure somewhere, though some have characteristically emphasized one more than others.

But religion is also something more than either group life or a quest for salvation: *it is a quest for understanding*; it is an effort to get at the most important truths about the world. We have indeed implied this at many points, and looking back can now see that man's rational powers are involved throughout his religious life. Indeed, one way of salvation describes itself as the way of knowledge. But the other ways of salvation also imply some kind of knowledge. For religions as patterns of action—which the ways of salvation are—and as creative of distinctive societies of their own, are also patterns of thought. They urge men to associate themselves in religious groups, and to undertake some distinctive way of life, because they embody certain beliefs about man and his world in the light of which men ought to act thus and so. Hence every religion is not

only a pattern of feeling, willing, and social grouping, but it is conditioned by an intellectual framework of some sort; and the pattern cannot be understood—or perhaps even come into being—apart from its framework. However much some religions, like early Buddhism, have tried to discourage intellectual speculation by refusing to discuss ultimate questions, or, like devotional Hinduism, have concentrated on feeling rather than thinking, a set of basic ideas about the world and its nature can always be found lurking in the background.

Now the manner in which religion undertakes to perform its intellectual labors is perhaps peculiar to it: it is a pattern of question and answer. On the one hand, it never asks questions without at the same time providing an answer; on the other hand, the main doctrines of religion, no matter how purely and simply affirmative they seem, usually imply that somewhere along the line a question has been asked. Nor is this quality accidental; it represents an essential element in religion; for religion is religious, we might say, only in so far as it does both raise and answer questions.

But we must again emphasize—at the peril of seeming overemphasis—that religion's main interest is always utilitarian: its knowledge must be good *for* something. It is concerned primarily with only so much truth as will enable men of faith to live the good life and gain salvation. Beyond this practical interest in knowledge it will never venture far. Yet its interest in knowledge and truth is genuine—narrow though it may be. It desperately desires to know certain basic facts about the universe and about man's place in it; it yields to no other discipline in its earnestness to achieve knowledge in this area. And further, it equally desperately wishes to achieve in its basic beliefs a type of certainty that will enable man to act with utter confidence; only in this context can we explain the great urgency of the religious quest for knowledge, and the deadly seriousness with which each religion adheres to its special version of the truth.

This does not mean that speculative thought has been entirely lacking in the religious sphere; in truth, before the rise of the professional philosopher and scientist, all such speculative thought as there was in the world occurred in the developing religious mythologies. Even after the rise of philosophy—and in part as a result—there has been in formal theology a considerable degree of speculation, particularly in the later stages of religious development; in fact, the line between theology and philosophy cannot always be clearly drawn. The philosopher may have religious interests, both as an individual and as a philosopher, so that religion and theology find themselves dealing with identical areas of intellectual concern—questions relating to the nature of the universe, for instance. The difference is that religion is far *less* speculative in its thinking than philosophy; it is already committed before it begins. It develops an already



accepted viewpoint, or elaborates on initial intuitions of truth, rather than continually setting out on new explorations. This does not of course prove its intuitions false; but it does indicate the preference of religion for proclamation rather than speculation, and for commitment rather than conjecture.

In this connection we may ask, then, whether in religion the question or answer comes first; and absurd though that may seem, there is meaning in such an inquiry; for more often than not, religion actually comes to the individual first as *answer*, not as question. In other words, it asks its questions by first answering them. "Do this," says the man of religion; "believe thus and so." "Why?" asks the listener. And the man of religious faith may reply: "Because these are the facts of the case: the world is of this nature; there are gods who require this or that of you; you are a certain kind of being, originating in this fashion, and capable of such and such a destiny." Thus, it is not with queries that religion approaches the outsider or the inquirer, but with answers—or at least with some definite affirmative statement. The question to which the affirmative religious doctrine is the answer is perhaps always implied, but it is also very often a hidden question; its asking is forestalled by its own answer, so to speak, before it is consciously asked. This is of course particularly true on the primitive level, where questions are seldom asked explicitly. The ancient and fixed primitive tradition says to the individual in effect: "This is the way to live in the kind of world of which we are a part. Walk according to this pattern." And so the primitive walks obediently.

But it is also true that the question is not, at any stage of religious development, entirely hidden. It may be temporarily concealed by the answer-form in which religion comes to the individual; but the tradition of any religion—however dogmatic or unquestioned—is in itself a recognition of the basic questions men have continually asked. For even dogmatic answers and affirmative statements always imply a question previously asked or about to be asked. The very statements religions make about the world indicate an awareness of the questions in the mind of every man, religious or not, and evidence the religious desire to answer such questions satisfactorily; indeed, a way of life can be called a religion *because* it thus satisfactorily answers man's presumed or actual questions. And when religions become more explicitly intellectualized along with their environing cultures, converts frequently adopt a new faith precisely because for them it deals better with these basic questions than any other source in sight. Thus, no small part of the triumph of Christianity in the Mediterranean area in the early Christian centuries was due to the fact that it had a solid intellectual framework, which competing religions did not have; and the same might be said today of the successful progress of Islam and Christianity in competition with Central African paganism. Perhaps we may say that in

religion question and answer stimulate each other, somewhat in the same manner that induction and deduction operate in the general intellectual history of mankind; new and better answers raise new and better questions, and vice versa.

Now in the questions which they ask, consciously or subconsciously, religions are basically at one. This does not mean that they all use the same words, or move in exactly the same circle of ideas when they ask and answer their questions. Nor—if we may judge by appearances—does it mean that all religions are equally interested in such questions. Many primitives take nearly everything visible for granted, showing very little curiosity about the origin of the world, for example, and having little or no cosmic mythology included in their cultural furniture. Such mythology as they possess may be more in the nature of a functional part of their total ritual pattern, part of a pattern of action rather than a matter of thought. Yet even here the question-answer duality is at least implicitly present. The primitive attitude could be thus expressed: "The ancients in their greater wisdom concerning the world established this way of life for us. Why should we raise questions when we have the answers?"

In other words, in the midst of the actual practice of a working pattern of thought and conduct that apparently contains all the necessary elements for successfully dealing with the world, any questions will remain unexpressed or largely unconscious. Only when that pattern is disturbed by disruptive forces from without or by growing intellectual curiosity from within, do questions come to the fore; in the experience of finding old answers unsatisfying, the queries that have been implied but not expressed come to light; and in the breaking up of a harmonious pattern of culture the mind begins—perhaps for the first time—to raise questions about that pattern.

When we come to the more developed religions, however, the hidden question that has been implied in the religious answer comes at last into the open; the advancing religions begin to deal quite deliberately with intellectual questions in their doctrinal structures and in their elaboration of scriptures, myths, and traditions; the dynamic interaction of question and answer begins. But, however varied the approach and terminology used in different religions, we may distinguish four main areas of basic question-answer concern which occur so uniformly in religious teachings that they can be called universal. They are: (1) *Whence do we come?*—the question of world and human origins; (2) *With what or whom have we to do?*—the question of the fundamental nature of man's envioning reality; (3) *What is man, and whither is he bound?*—the question of the nature and destiny of man; (4) *Why do men suffer?*—the so-called problem of evil.

So fundamental are these questions that we cannot claim any monopoly of



interest in them on the part of religion—unless it be in the last one. We may say, indeed, with considerable historical justification, that these questions have been dealt with *first* in a specifically religious context in nearly all cultures—that is, by means of that peculiar method of “answer to questions not yet clearly asked” that we have noted above. But, with the rise of philosophy and science, religion has had competitors in its attempt to answer such questions, so that we may say that now it represents only one among several ways of answering them.

But if religion has no monopoly of the attempt to ask and answer the above questions, it *is* distinctive in its approach to them and its interest in them. Science has turned away from seeking any total “meaning” in the universe, and from attempts to answer “why” questions, to a description of the physical patterns and processes of man’s environment. Philosophy does entertain the ultimate question and seek its answer, but is much wider than religion in its scope of interest and more detached in its attitude. Religion, however, in contrast to science, still doggedly concerns itself with ultimate meanings, and is drivingly insistent on such answers to these basic questions as shall provide man with an intellectual basis for action—in contrast to philosophic coolness and calm detachment. For how can man act responsibly, and in his own final interest, unless he knows something of his origins, his own nature and destiny, and the kind of world with which he has to deal? asks religion.

Thus the essential nature of the religious quest determines the basic questions it chooses for emphasis, the type of interest it has in them, and the persistence with which it pursues its answers. It is a way of seeking salvation in ultimate terms, and is primarily concerned to know about man and his world in those terms, and those terms alone. There has, indeed, been some plain and fancy intellectual needlework among theologies and religious philosophies that was not strictly necessary to this central religious concern—a kind of loving decoration of the sacred doctrines. Yet the *main* drive has always been for the achievement of salvation—even in the intellectual area; all religious questions are essentially nothing else but variant forms of the fundamental query: how shall a man be saved?—he being of such and such a nature and having to do with this or that kind of a world.

The last of the four questions is in some sense peculiar to religion—at least it is peculiar to religion in the form here given: why do men suffer? The raw materials of the question are, to be sure, universally human. Everyone in all ages is familiar with suffering in its many forms; and many attempts of all kinds have been made to deal, both intellectually and practically, with suffering. But the “why” question is religion’s own, for it has meaning only if we assume a religious perspective. If we presume—as religions usually do—that there is some

over-all purpose in the world—an Absolute who includes all the universe in His being, or a God who directs it by His will, or even several gods or spirits who direct our affairs from above—then we can ask: why is there suffering? But if nature is only a mechanical process with no guiding intelligence, or only a collection of disordered fragments, then this question does not arise. Suffering is merely the mechanical effect of the existing order of things on human beings, and we ask only, what causes this particular kind of suffering? or, what can be done about it? Thus it was only because Job believed in an almighty God who was both just and good that he raised his question: why do good men suffer? And to this day it is only in such a religious context that this question has meaning or is even asked.

## 2. *Religious Language*

One further matter calls for attention before we turn to the consideration of the specific questions about which religions have concerned themselves; and it is a problem—the problem of religious language. How literally are we to understand that language? how literally do religionists themselves intend it? This is particularly difficult to answer, in view of the fact that much of the classic religious language comes from the distant past (the early days of the religion), and that it is so frequently highly symbolic.

Obviously the language religion uses in its scriptures and rituals—or perhaps the extraordinary way in which religion uses ordinary language—is different from customary usage. It strikes the uninitiated on first acquaintance as strange or even wild; nor is it always certain that even the supposedly initiated fully understand what they are saying. There are many cases on record, in fact, in which religious rituals are conducted in a language that is strange to the worshipers—language that may have, to the ears of the faithful, the sound but not the sense of the original. (This occurs when a ritual is taken across phonetically into another language.) And, furthermore, religious language always appears to be very imprecise—capable of many meanings at the same time. It deals in figures of speech—metaphors, paradoxes, and similes; it uses parables, analogies, stories, all without explanation. “The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a sower sowing seed”—in which we have not only a likeness suggested, but a likeness in which one constituent part, “Kingdom of Heaven,” itself needs interpretation. It revels in myth and legend rather than sober history, and splashes the colors of imagination freely over the most commonplace facts.

Religion appears on the whole, in its use of language, to paint pictures rather than give precise information; it counts on the intuitive understanding of the hearer, rather than on accuracy of description or clearness of statement, to communicate its meaning; and only those who have been long initiated in its sym-



bolisms seem to be able to intuit its meanings correctly. It deals with the emotional overtones certain words arouse, and expects these overtones to carry significance as much as the words themselves. In moments of inspiration it is poetical rather than prosaic. (Most technical creeds are committee work, done the morning after the night before to meet an ecclesiastical conference deadline.) It frequently speaks in two-level language—or by opposing two statements in its paradoxes and calling them both true: "He that saveth his life shall lose it."

Religious language, then, is a highly suggestive symbolism rather than the logical or precise communication of information by the clearest and most direct use possible. This should not surprise us—no matter how confusing it may seem—for we have observed how richly symbolical religion is at almost every point. Actually its symbolic use of words is only a very small part of its total use of symbolism, which we have observed to include physical activity and sense experiences of every sort. In many ritual patterns, for example, it would be very hard to specify just where "words" end and "acts" begin; words are frequently ritual acts themselves—at least in their ritual speaking. Thus the recital of the key word and the telling of the myth are essential parts of the primitive rain dance. Or when the God-intoxicated worshiper in a revival service shouts "Glory to God! Glory! Glory!" is it word or deed? And in a Catholic Mass the intoning chant of the priest, as well as the words spoken, is an intrinsic part of the liturgical rhythm. It would seem that whenever religion seeks to express itself it is symbolical—whether in word or deed.

While religion is more than usually symbolical in its use of language, this should not hide from us the highly symbolical character of *all* language, in whatever field it is used. After all, words do not occur in physical nature, nor are they its inevitable products; they are highly formalized and arbitrary signs created by human beings to point in the direction of experiences, meanings, realities, and sensations that they do not themselves contain. A few words, like "buzz," for example, may seem to mirror the reality to which they point in their very voicing. But the word "red" might just as well have applied to the color we call "green," had language got started that way. And other languages did get started in other ways than English, so that the syllable pronounced by us as "red" would mean something utterly different in another language—or maybe nothing at all. Indeed, there is nothing intrinsic in the word itself, whether "red" or "God" or any other, that necessarily brings us the experience of the reality it indicates; it is only that we have agreed among ourselves that this sound shall point to that thing or meaning, and hope that when we use it the hearer will know approximately what thing or experience we are pointing at. But the fact that communication becomes so difficult—when we go beyond

the mere "See this" and "Look at that" stage—indicates that even the most precise and objective of our words are highly symbolic forms; indeed, can anything be more symbolic (and abstract from reality) than the highest ranges of mathematical physics?

What, then, is the difference between the way in which we ordinarily use these symbols called words and the peculiar religious use of them? It may help if we try to define the function of a symbol of whatever sort. Paul Tillich has named four characteristics of a symbol: (1) It is a figurative, not literal, pointing beyond itself to another reality; (2) it is itself tangible or perceptible, implying "that something which is intrinsically invisible, ideal, or transcendent is made perceptible in the symbol"; (3) the symbol has innate power—power to give a sense of real communication with the reality it points to; (4) it is "socially rooted and socially supported," growing out of the life of some community and expressing its tradition.<sup>1</sup>

The religious symbol obviously fulfills all these conditions—perhaps better, indeed, than any other type of symbol we could mention. First, it surely points beyond itself, for religion as a whole is a pointing-beyond-itself kind of thing. Second, the tangibility of most religious symbols is beyond question; indeed, religious symbols seem *too* tangible to many persons, and religion *too* bound to its physical expressions, its rituals, holy books, and all the rest. Yet the meaning of it all—to believe the religious account—is that these expressions are necessary representations of the invisible and ideal. Third, for the devout the religious symbol has great power—perhaps too much—since the line between a superstitious reverence for the symbol and a truly religious reverence for what it symbolizes is not always clearly drawn. And, finally—as we have before insisted—ritualism is a distinctively group-patterned activity, and is meaningful only when it does express the life values of the worshiping community.

But the symbolic function in religion is not distinctive simply because of its rich and varied fulfillment of the specifications of symbolism in general; in one major respect it goes beyond other symbolisms. In the words of Tillich: "Religious symbols are distinguished from others by the fact that they are a representation of that which is *unconditionally* beyond the conceptual sphere, they point to the ultimate reality implied in the religious act, the unconditioned transcendent."<sup>2</sup> That is, the religious symbol tries to deal with meanings and realities beyond the scope of ordinary representations—even of the symbolic sort—and of those dealt with in other connections, and yet to make them somewhat comprehensible to ordinary thought. All religion, in other words, is somewhat mystical in this respect: it is trying to describe what it conceives to

<sup>1</sup> "The Religious Symbol," *The Journal of Liberal Religion*, Summer, 1940, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14 f.; italics added.



be essentially beyond description by ordinary means; to extend its apprehension to the ultimate range of human experience and interest, well beyond the scope of other disciplines of thought.

We might compare religious and artistic symbolism in this respect: both alike are dissatisfied with ordinary and technical language. Ordinary language is dull and muddy, failing to respond to finer shades of meaning; the technical type of language is precise, but limited and abstracted from the fullness of life. Both of them do very poorly in communicating certain ranges of experience on the personal level, in expressing emotional values, in passing on to others some kinds of awareness, or in dealing with some of the more subtle human interests. And for this insufficiency of ordinary language they both seek to compensate—art by its often nonverbal symbols of shape, color, and sound, religion by its colorful rituals and sacred words.

But there is a difference. Many branches of art are willing to leave their meanings unexplained for men to interpret anyway they will, though now and then they seek to make their forms intelligible through explanatory words—as when the artist titles his pictures. Religion, however, is not willing to leave its symbolism completely—or even for the larger part—in purely unexplained and mysterious form. Though it tries to penetrate to that sense of life which is beyond language, it also tries to a considerable degree to make that sense intelligible. Even the mystic, who proclaims that his knowledge is different from the ordinary kind, strives mightily to communicate with his nonmystical fellows; that is, religion intends that its symbols shall have some degree of rational meaning. Thus religion is nearer to poetry than to any other art form; for the poet also is seeking to put the incommunicable, or the hardly communicable, into definite, meaningful words rather than leave the masterpiece to speak for itself, as most branches of art insist on doing.

The reason for this difference is again to be found in the nature of religion. It is profoundly serious and practical. It is not satisfied merely that one shall feel for feeling's sake, or experience a sensation for the thrill of it; it seeks those ultimate values of feeling and experience that seem to be communicated only with difficulty—primarily because it is convinced that they belong to a realm that directly affects man's salvation; it sees in them intimations of that realm of ultimate truth and reality with which it would acquaint man. Therefore it seeks in some way to connect even its most interior experiences with the total life of man, and give them rational form for his easier appropriation. For communication of these ultimate truths is a prime religious necessity; it is through such communication that the way into the divine life is opened anew to men.

Religion, then, suffers under a double disability: it deals by choice with the most ultimate considerations, the "unconditioned transcendent," because it is

persuaded that here is the source of man's salvation; and yet, because it does seek man's salvation, it cannot be content to leave totally within itself its intuitions of the transcendent, other-worldly mystery, but must give them rational form. Thus it picks out for special attention those questions which go beyond the utmost reach of any knowledge produced by any other discipline of thought: How did the world begin? What is it like in its deepest depth? (is the universe friendly?) What is the true nature of man beneath all appearances; and what is the quality of his final destiny? What is the meaning of that suffering which is the universal human lot? And at the same time it seeks to furnish an answer to each of these questions on the basis of its primitive intuitions, yet one which shall yet accord in some way with the increasing measure of knowledge men gain from other sources.

Thus arises the supersymbolic use of language in religion. For how else can ultimate meanings be expressed in not-so-ultimate language? how, save by symbolisms, can one express his intuition that the world once did not exist in time or space, but finally achieved both existence and orderly form? For we have no language to deal with such questions. Thus arises the *myth* form of religious symbolism, so prominent in religious literature, with whose statements we shall deal repeatedly in the ensuing chapters; and it has been an exceedingly important one in the history of religious thinking. Indeed, most of religion's great intuitions about the problems we have indicated for future treatment—origins, nature of the cosmos, destiny of man, and the problem of evil—have been expressed in mythical form. It is therefore unfortunate that "mythical" has come to mean, for all practical purposes, fanciful, unhistorical, untrue; for this has led to a misunderstanding of its role and meaning in religion.

Let us repeat here what was said before about the myth—that it probably began its historical career as a part of ritual rather than as philosophical theory. The ritual bodied forth the myth, and the myth was necessary as a sort of stage direction for acting out the ritual. Yet the myth is the initial growing point for religious thought; around it as a center gathered explanations as to why certain customs and ritual pattern were followed. There was hung on it, as on a peg, all the early intellectualization of religion. Little by little the myth was detached from its liturgical moorings, until it was something of a nonliturgical account in its own right, and became the focus of further systematic and speculative thought. In the end it arrived in the various religious faiths as scripture and theological writing.

The fact that many of these myths were written in the early days of religion in somewhat primitive cultural contexts, and therefore use antiquated language and conceptions, should not hide from us the fact of the constant necessity of using somewhat mythical language *whenever* we deal with such ultimates. We



have our myths today even in the scientific age; they have only changed their form from the seemingly primitive to the apparently sophisticated style. Indeed, science itself, from sheer necessity, has created its own mythical language. So Tillich:

For the purpose of constructing this world of "things," science needs concepts that are transcendent to reality. In this way science . . . itself becomes myth-creative; thus concepts like evolution, will to power, life, etc., have mythical character. They no longer serve only for the construction of the empirical order, but rather indicate the transcendent presuppositions of this order.

But since the element of the Unconditioned (that is, the absolute rather than the relative) is firmly implanted in each of these presuppositions . . . there comes into science an element of the religious, mythical mentality. Hence it is possible for the ultimate presuppositions of science to be classed with the highest concepts of abstract mysticism or abstract monotheism.<sup>3</sup>

Are mythical accounts, then, true or false? and if true, in what sense? It would probably be impossible to answer this question to everyone's satisfaction—the satisfactoriness of any answer would depend so greatly on one's own deepest convictions. We can probably say, however, that the writers of myth should be called religious poets. They did not take their creations in literature with the literal seriousness of many of their descendants, who have insisted on finding in the Rig-Veda or Genesis a literal blow-by-blow description of creation. But they were, on the other hand, probably completely serious in what they sought to do; they were as serious as the poet who believes that he has important truth to express to mankind that cannot be fully expressed save in poetic form; he means seriously enough what he says, but would not wish to be held accountable for a literal rendering of every word—that would be to narrow and falsify his meaning or restrict it to one level of significance.

We might say, therefore, in answer to the questions about the truth of myth: "poetic" and "mythical" must not indicate to us the untruthful and fantastic—they were not so intended. The myth is an attempt to deal with questions whose ultimacy still strains our resources of thought and expression; it is a perennial effort to embody the more subtle and spiritual elements of human experience in communicable form. And each man who wishes to deal with reality in terms of its ultimate values and meaning will necessarily have to make a choice of some such "mythical" accounts—scientific, religious, or philosophic—for his own ultimate orientation to the world in which he lives.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

## SECTION II

### FOUR BASIC QUESTIONS AND THEIR ANSWERS

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#### *Chapter XXV*

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#### WHENCE DO WE COME? FROM A DIVINE SOURCE

One of the questions men have most universally asked, and one religions have everywhere sought to answer, has been: how did the world and the human race begin? In this explicit form it is not quite as universal as we have indicated, for some primitives show scant curiosity about beginnings; the world that now is engages most of their interest, with only a small remainder directed toward the past. And this present world is dealt with directly and practically through magic, which has somewhat the same narrow interest in it that physical science has. Such cosmologies (theories of the nature and beginning of the universe) as may exist among them are largely in terms of a rather vague "once upon a time" or "the fathers have told us" kind of account.

But it is not long before explicit accounts of beginnings make their appearance; cosmologies are some of the first products of religious thought—at least when the stage of scripture-writing has been reached. Hence such primitive accounts may come in for considerable editing by later thinkers; and sometimes there is a radical reinterpretation of their original content, or a change of form—even within the limits of the scripture itself. For example, there are apparently, in the first three chapters of Genesis, two accounts of the creation. The Adam and Eve account, in the 2nd and 3rd chapters, would seem to be the older—perhaps handed down for generations by word of mouth; its first writing may have taken place some centuries before the writing of the account in the first chapter; and still later the two were woven together in the unified document we now have. The completed Old Testament doctrine of creation is to be found in the latter part of the book of Isaiah (Chapters 40-45), written last of all.



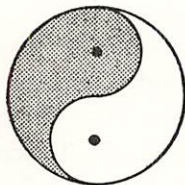
Actually there has been a considerable development of thinking in this area, in one form or another, in nearly all the religions we are surveying. In some cases it has occurred within the compass of their scriptures themselves, as noted above; but in all cases it can be found somewhere along the line in the theological or philosophical writings of the faith. Most of these faiths from time to time have had their "fundamentalist" groups, who have insisted on the literal interpretation of their scriptures; but adaptation and interpretation of the initial clues found in scriptures have gone on nonetheless. We cannot here enter into a history of all these developments, which in some religions—notably Christianity and Hinduism—have been extensive. But what we can and shall do is to outline the classic statements these faiths have made in their sacred writings. By observing these original forms we shall be able to distinguish clearly from each other the several basic viewpoints. Yet such a distinction—though seeming at first glance too simple—will be adequate as well; for no matter how sophisticated a version of creation doctrine we may find in modern Hinduism or Christianity, for instance, each faith has essentially followed out the original clue as provided by its scriptures. In fact, we may say in general that in most historic religions later doctrinal statements are but elaborations of the original intuition, expanding it or giving it more sophisticated form but not altering its main emphasis or basic conception.

Our five examples are chosen, not because they are utterly different from each other, but because each exhibits some distinctive characteristics that tie in with the general quality of the religion from which they come. (1) The *Chinese* version, expressed to some extent in both Taoism and Confucianism, represents creation to have come about through eternally operating principles or forces; it is not, strictly speaking, theistic—Taoist and Confucian gods having made their appearance only in the later degenerate forms of these systems. (2) The *Hindu* account, found in the *Puranas*, combines the apparently inharmonious conceptions of an impersonal creative force and the activity of gods, in a blend quite characteristic of all Indian religion. (For such accounts of world origins as it later accepted Buddhism depended so largely on Hinduism as to be separately unimportant for our purposes.) (3) The *Hebrew* conception is that of creation by a personal God, which was taken over directly by both Christianity and Islam. (4) The *Zoroastrian* portrayal is closely allied to the Hebrew, but has the peculiar feature of a creative cosmic conflict between the powers of darkness and light. (5) The *Shintoist* pattern is a somewhat ordinary polytheistic one, but has special interest because of its centering of the gods' attention on the Japanese Islands and their inhabitants—especially on the family of the emperor.

1. *The Chinese Account: A Dynamic Balance of Cosmic Elements*

The Chinese account of cosmic and human origins is perhaps one of the oldest in religious literature; it was already ancient in the time of Confucius (6th century B.C.); he simply passed it along to his followers without comment, so to speak, hoping to preserve the total literature, in which it was embedded, as the general cultural heritage of a much superior past. He betrays no particular interest in the account itself. Some alterations were made in the account in ensuing generations, but they were a matter of detail rather than of the main structure; for the Chinese genius has from the beginning been practical rather than philosophical, and hence was not interested in further speculation.

The root concept of this account of the origin and nature of the cosmos is that of the dynamic balance of two impersonal forces. It distinguishes two primeval elements: K'i (pronounced "chee"), which was a vital essence appearing tangibly as air, vapor, or breath; and Li (pronounced "lee"), the active formative principle, somewhat corresponding to the concept of uniform natural law. Li, as the active force, worked on K'i as on a material base to produce the world. In the course of time Li came to be represented as a circle that included all the humanly knowable, divided into two halves, Yang and Yin. (See diagram below.)



Now Yang and Yin represent opposing but at the same time complementary principles or forces in the world; they are present in all visible creation, including gods and men. Yang is the heavenly essence of light, activity, and masculinity; Yin is the earthly quality of darkness, passivity, and femininity. (Gods as such play a very slight role here, though sometimes the Yang element is thought of as the rough equivalent of God.) These two elements are in dynamic balance in the cosmos, now one, then the other, predominating in a given situation. The figure above is presumed to suggest a dynamic balance that escapes both static order and chaotic activity. The circle turns on its own center to the right or the left; from that rotation, with the earth at the center, the heavens and outer spaces were thrown off.

This creative opposition of Yang and Yin is present in all things that exist, whatever their form; the seasons, day and night, events in nature, historical occurrences, all show evidences of this activity. Yang-Yin activity has resulted



in the creation of the five component physical elements from which the world is made: metal, wood, fire, water, and earth; even man himself is formed from a special combination of some of these elements, and is therefore part and parcel of the natural order about him.

But the Yang-Yin interaction did not exhaust itself in the creation of the physical elements of the visible world; its dynamic dualism persists throughout all levels of the outer and inner life. All bright, active, positive forces in nature are Yang forces: the heavens above, the shining sun, the warm bright seasons, that which is living and colorful. Heaven, as the governing power in the universe—only vaguely personalized in Chinese thought—is predominantly Yang; and so are a host of beneficent spirits (*shen*) which surround man and mediate to him the power of Heaven. The peculiarly masculine prejudice of most ancient cultures likewise appears in attributing more of the Yang quality to men than to women. And the same distinction applies to the moral and mental qualities of mankind: the sage is deeply permeated by the Yang principle; and whatever is positively or notably of value in the intellectual and moral sphere comes from that same source.

Obviously the opposite or contrasting factor in all these cases is Yin-possessed; earth, winter, night, the forces of decay, damp and cold, evil spirits (*kwei*), and evil men are all governed by Yin. This does not mean that the Chinese recognized a supreme principle of evil, or evil being, in the world, or that they thought that there was a genuine moral depravity in human nature. For the dark, passive, Yin principle was as necessary to creation and the ongoing life of the world as the Yang; its opposition to Yang is a dynamic tension, not an utter opposition that might result in deadlock, confusion, or moral conflict. Thus, woman is considered more under the influence of Yin than man, just because she is presumed inferior—not because she is evil *per se*; most of mankind hangs pretty well in the balance, both male and female, requiring only a little more of either Yang or Yin element to make them “good” or “bad.”

The earliest form of the Chinese account of beginnings lacked any statement about a first man or woman. Later the shadowy figure of P'an Ku—meaning literally “undeveloped and unenlightened” or “embryo”—made an appearance. Materials concerning him are very sparse; he apparently is little more, in Chinese thought, than a symbol of the physical beginnings of life, with no historical significance.

## 2. *The Hindu Account: Brahman Forms the World Egg*

The very earliest Hindu accounts of the creation of the world are to be found in the ancient Vedas. In these there is envisioned no supreme Creator, but several more important gods, who appear primarily to be personified nature forces;

and to each of them is attributed, in some context or other, the creation of the world in whole or in part. Indra, god of storms; Rudra, the mountain god (who later became Shiva the Destroyer and Reviver, with a consort of the same nature, Kali or Durga); Vishnu, the sky or sun god; Varuna, the god of order; Surya and Savitar, also sun gods; Ushas, the dawn goddess; the liturgical gods, Agni of the fire, and Soma of the sacrificial (intoxicating) drink—all these on occasion are held to be world-creators. On the whole it may be said that the sky and sun gods appear to have a margin of favor over the others in the attribution to them of creative powers.

The first consistent development of a creation account appears finally in the writings called *Puranas*. These are of indefinite date, containing materials from well before the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., as well as later elements. Though the literature of Hinduism is vast, and the creation theme has been given other interpretations—especially by the philosophers—the account in the *Puranas* is the one most generally accepted by Hinduism—particularly on the popular level; it is an elaboration and systematization of the rather vague hints in the *Vedas*.

One of the basic motifs in the *Purana* accounts—but drawn from the *Upanishads* (earlier commentaries on the *Vedas*)—is the concept of the “world egg.” The world egg, says the *Chandogya Upanishad* (iii, 19), was half silver (heaven), and half gold (earth). The egg white formed the mountains, the fluid the seas. The following account from one of the *Puranas* includes this egg concept, but in somewhat more sophisticated form. (The “He” of the first sentences is not immediately identified, save as intelligence or mind, or primordial being; later “He” is identified with Brahman, as in the following passage.)

He, desiring to produce beings of many kinds from his own body, first with a thought created the waters and placed his seed in them. That [seed] became a golden egg, in brilliancy equal to the sun; in that [egg] he himself was born as Brahman, the progenitor of the whole world. . . .

From that [first] cause, which is indestructible, eternal; and both real and unreal, was produced that male [Purusha] who is famed in this world [under the appellation of] Brahman. The divine one resided in that egg during a whole year, then he himself by his thought [alone] divided it into two halves; and out of these two halves he formed heaven and earth, between them the middle sphere, the eight points of the horizon, and the eternal abode of the waters. From himself he also drew forth the mind . . . likewise from the mind egoism [individual personality] which possesses the function of self-consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

The world egg then is suspended on the waters, with seven heavens above and seven hells or purgatories beneath. After this the rest of the cosmic forma-

<sup>1</sup> “Cosmogony and Cosmology (Indian)” *Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IV, p. 158.



tion takes place: the individual gods, the eternal Vedas (scriptures), and the sun and planets come forth in due order. In the course of time mental and spiritual qualities make their appearance; pleasures and pain, and other contrasting forms of experience come into being. Throughout all this process, the male principle *Purusha* dominates creation as the dynamic moving force and formative power. At times *Purusha* is made practically synonymous with Brahman; that is, Brahman is essentially of *Purusha* nature; at other times the term seems to mean an impersonal soul-principle in the world that comes to a particularly clear and distinctive expression in man.

Man made his appearance on the scene in the person of Yama or Manu—the Hindu Adam—and, after the manner of most such accounts, was a far mightier man than any of his descendants. He was the presumed author of the *Laws of Manu*, and after his death became a kind of demigod, the ruler of the underworld. This is only an account of man's supposed historical appearance, however—and historical accounts are never too important for Hindu thinking. What is really significant about man is his eternal aspect; viewed thus he is of the same essence as Brahman, the world-soul, without regard to the facts of his earthly appearance. Next only to the gods—and in some contexts even more than they—he is the fullest incarnation of that divine soul-substance, *Purusha* or creative principle, which is Brahman's essential quality. To be sure, he possesses this quality in varying degrees, depending mainly on his caste; the higher castes obviously possess more *Purusha* than the lower, for (as before noted) the four castes were created in order from the lips, arms, thighs, and feet of Brahman.

Two interesting later developments may be noted here. Indian thought of all periods tends to keep the creative and the destructive linked in the divine being, and also on the cosmic scene, without any sense of irreconcilable conflict. It does not separate them, as do Jewish and Christian thought (we shall discuss this aspect more in detail in a later chapter). And the other development is this: though Hinduism begins with a somewhat pantheistic account of creation, its later theistic forms (*bhakti* cults) tend to speak of a definite act of creation, and to ascribe it to a specific god, much in the same way as the Hebrews did; the main difference would perhaps be that creation is less materialistically and literally conceived. It is not so much an actual formation by the hand of God as an emanation or radiation from His being, essentially spiritual in quality.

### 3. *The Hebrew Account: God Wills the World into Being*

We of the Western world are most familiar with the Hebraic account of the creation contained in the Christian Bible. The distinctive thing about this account is its conviction that the world was created by a personal power, called

God, or Jehovah, Who willed the world into its present form by a definite act and perhaps at a definite period in time; at least the world as we know it had a definite beginning in time. And it would be more accurate to say that God *willed* the world into being than that He thought it into existence—which is more the Hindu conception. (For the Hindu conceives the physical as perhaps less real than the mental; but the Hebrew had a healthy respect for historical and physical realities, and thought of God as operating concretely with them.) This willed-into-being concept has been taken over in its entirety by Christian and Moslem, so that in dealing with the Hebrew concept we are dealing with all three.

The Hebrew account, as we finally get it in the Bible, did not of course arise full-fledged; behind it, as behind all such accounts, there were undoubtedly centuries of a growing oral tradition, passed on from generation to generation. And it may well be that the Hebrew stories found in Genesis show some dependence on Babylonian sources, or on a source common to both; for there are interesting parallels between them.

The earliest Biblical account—the first distinctively Hebrew one—is the familiar story of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis, 2:4–3:24. This is expertly woven into the literary fabric of the book, along with the creation story of Chapter 1, but it appears to be from a different mold of thought and writing; it deals specifically and extendedly with the creation of man—not of the entire earth, as does the first chapter account. Adam was created by God out of a handful of clay, into which He breathed His living spirit. Placed in a garden to till it, Adam finds no true companionship among the animals, until Eve, “the mother of all living,” is created from a rib taken out of his side, and becomes a fitting companion. From this pair descended all the peoples of the earth.

The majestic account of Chapter 1 would seem to be a later reworking of this ancient story, with more attention given to the cosmic background. Here it is recorded thus:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:1–2)

Then, in orderly progression, in six “days,” came light, day and night, the heavens above the earth, the appearance of land out of the midst of the sea, and the whole range of living creatures, from the green plants, through the creeping, crawling denizens of the sea and earth, through animals and fowl, on up to man, who stands nobly and majestically at the summit of creation. And having “finished” His creation, and seen that it was good, God rejoiced in it and rested on the seventh day.



This is the fullest statement of the creation process to be found in the Bible, but in Isaiah (in that portion written during the Exile or after) is a statement that, without detailing the creation process, even more roundly affirms the absolute creative power of God over the earth and all there is in it. The language is poetic and imprecise, yet the import is clear: God has deliberately created everything that exists and completely controls it:

Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? . . .

Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?

It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. . . . (40:12, 13, 21, 22)

I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: . . . I am the Lord, and there is none else.

I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. . . .

For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it. . . . I am the Lord; and there is none else. (45:5-7, 18)

There are other passages dealing with creation (Amos 4:13, 5:8; Isaiah 51:9-18; Psalms 33:6, 104, etc.), but they add little or nothing to the basic thought of those we have already considered.

Two general features of this Hebrew concept call for particular comment. One is the very specific description of man as possessing a divine status. Not only is he placed at the summit of creation, as the last, best, and highest product; not only is he given subdominion over the earth under God, to use and enjoy the rest of creation; he is made in the likeness of God: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27). Islam and Christianity have both taken very seriously this theme of man's divine sonship—especially Christianity—and centered in it their major teachings about the relations of God and man.

The other aspect to be noted is in some respects a counterbalance to man's eminence in the created order: God is placed well above and beyond His creation, including the being He has made in His own image. There is here a very clear distinction between Creator and creature of whatever grade—one that is never blurred in all the course of Hebrew thinking, early or late. Certainly God's power is shown in His creation, and He is constantly active in it; on this the Hebrew is insistent. But God is not "in" His creation in the way the Hindu

conceives Brahman to be in the creative process, or the Chinese conceived Yang-Yin to permeate all physical existence; the Hebrew never thought of "worshiping God in nature," nor had the slightest idea that nature and God were the same, nor considered the world to be the "body" of God. And never did he speak of man becoming "one" with God, achieving union with him, or being "deified"—though man *was* called to co-operation and fellowship with God, and in one sense was considered to be His son.

This insistence on the *transcendence* of God to nature (above and beyond it), as opposed to the Hindu concept of God's *immanence* in nature (being part of it), led finally to the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, creation out of nothing. To be sure, this is not clearly stated in Genesis; the void mentioned there might be already existent material substance in unorganized state; nor is it clearly indicated in the Isaiah passages we have quoted. In fact, neither the Old or New Testament distinctly states this doctrine of absolute creation, though it may seem that we are next door to it in Hebrews 11:2: "By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear" (R.S.V.). But are "things which do not appear" sheer nothingness? The real passage theologians finally chose as a proof text comes from the Old Testament Apocryphal book of II Maccabees (accepted by Catholics as inspired Scripture, but by neither Jews nor Protestants):

I beseech you, my child, to look up at the heaven and the earth, and see all that is in them, and perceive that God did not make them out of the things that existed. . . . (II Maccabees 7:28, Goodspeed translation)

Some would say that the Latin version (Vulgate), which has been the authoritative version of the Bible in the Catholic Church from the 4th century, overtranslates the passage when it reads *ex nihilo*; but it was on the basis of this passage, and in general accord with the Hebrew doctrine of God's complete superiority to His creation, that Christian theologians went on to elaborate the distinctively Christian concept of the earth's being projected into physical and temporal being from sheer nothingness by the creative act of God. They ultimately rejected the Greek idea of an eternally existing physical substance with which God worked, as providing a competitor to God's power and eternity, and as constituting an element in the universe more ancient than He. Only relatively recently, under philosophic and scientific influence, has something of this Greek idea been revived in Christian circles.

#### 4. *The Zoroastrian Account: Light Against Darkness*

The Zoroastrian story of creation forms a close parallel to the Hebrew; there is indeed some probable interdependence between the two accounts. Ahura Mazda (or Ormazd), the God of Light, is a personal and righteous being; he



it was who created the earth in a series of six epochs, which found their climax in the creation of man in the sixth. He has as his opponent the evil spirit Ahri-man—as the Hebrew Jehovah has Satan—which at least temporarily limits his omnipotence.

But there are also distinctions peculiar to Zoroastrianism. The Hebrew account introduces evil by the sidedoor, so to speak. A “serpent” tempts Eve and Adam to seek more knowledge than their lowly estate merits, and discord enters into God’s creation. Was the serpent conceived as a cosmic principle of evil, over against God? It hardly seems so. Much later, when the book of Job was written, Satan, “the adversary,” was pictured in the role of a subordinate spirit of mischief, a tempter of man, but one who operated only by God’s permission. Not till much later yet—perhaps under the subsequent influence of Zoroastrianism, and even then mainly in Christian and Islamic hands—the concept of Satan as a Fearful Opposition is developed.

In Zoroastrianism, however, evil is present in cosmic size from the very beginning. Standing over against Ahura Mazda, the God of Light, Ahriman, the Demon of Darkness and Destruction, offers a worthy opposition; these two were twin principles in the world’s creation, which were apparently necessary to each other and to the world’s appearance in some way—somewhat as with the Chinese Yang and Yin. But here also are differences: the two principles are bitterly opposed to each other in age-long struggle, and one of them will be destroyed in the end; and because Ahura and Ahriman are conceived of as personal beings, their opposition is that of a moral conflict, rather than a creative tension between natural elements, as in the Chinese conception. One further thing: though both beings are from eternity—as far as man and the world are concerned—there is a certain priority in Ahura Mazda’s existence; it was the shining of his light in the primeval darkness that awakened the dormant Ahri-man to activity. Ahura knew of Ahriman beforehand, and knew that his own light and creative activity would rouse Ahriman to activity; yet he nonetheless found it desirable to create. On the other hand, Ahriman did not know of Ahura until light made its way into his realm of primeval darkness.

World history is divided into four epochs of 3,000 years each, said Zoroaster. The first was the era of spiritual creation, during which the forces of light and right were supreme. The second was that of material creation, in which beneficent spirits, earth and the planets, and finally man, were created in six successive stages. The third era is the present one, at whose beginning Ahriman erupted into activity; he created a host of evil spirits that produced pain, disease, darkness, moral evil, and death in the world. Thus in this present age we often see good and evil so evenly balanced in their struggle that it is difficult to tell which will win. Yet “from the beginning, we were winning”; for it is ordained that

in the last 3,000 years Ahura Mazda will finally and utterly rout his ancient foe and establish the reign of light and goodness everywhere in the universe.

According to Zoroaster, man's lot has been difficult from the very beginning. Shortly after his creation in the sixth epoch of world history, the original man was destroyed by Ahriman. But miraculously his sperm was preserved in a plant, which in time, by secret growth, became Mashya and Mashyoi—the Zoroastrian Adam and Eve. As in the Hebrew account, they were somewhat corrupted by the forces of evil, yet retained their essential likeness to Ahura Mazda, their spiritual creator.

Both Hebrew and Zoroastrian viewed the physical world somewhat similarly. It was a flat plane bounded by—and perhaps resting on—the seas or the deep. Above it were the heavens, the abode of God, or—in Zoroastrian terms—the abode of endless light and the realm of “constantly beneficial space.” Below it was the abyss of evil, the abode of darkness. This latter concept was not greatly elaborated by the Hebrew Scriptures; the abyss, or Sheol, retained in its character as the abode of the dead something of a neutral quality; but in keeping with its strongly dualistic character Zoroastrianism filled the abyss full of the most horrible specters and the deepest darkness conceivable, as well as making it the abode of Ahriman.

### 5. *The Japanese Account: Divine Land and Divine People*

Japanese Shinto conceives its gods as a combination of nature forces and semi-personal beings that reminds us of the middle stages of Hindu thinking—half-way between the Vedic polytheism of nature gods and the personalized gods of bhakti theism. The names of the gods themselves seem scarcely personal, but more like official functions synthesized into a kind of unity, and capitalized in their spelling to give a sense of a presence or power. The first great gods were Deity-Master-of-the-August-Center-of-Heaven, High-August-Producing-Wondrous-Deity, and Divine-Producing-Wondrous-Deity. They were born by a process of spontaneous generation, having no forebears. Then began the creation:

Now when chaos had begun to condense, but force and form were not yet manifest, and there was nought named, nought done, who could know its shape? Nevertheless Heaven and Earth first parted, and the three deities performed the commencement of creation; the passive and active Essences then developed, and the Two Spirits became the ancestors of all things.<sup>2</sup>

A series of lesser beings then followed; and finally, after seven generations of unspecified length, the earth creative principles, the “Two Spirits” mentioned above, appeared incarnated in the two deities Izanagi (Male-Who-Invites), and

<sup>2</sup> Robert O. Ballou, *Shinto, the Unconquered Enemy*, p. 91.



Izanami (Female-Who-Invites). These two earth-creating deities were born on the plain of the high heavens, growing out of a reed-like shoot, and proceeded by command of the higher gods to begin the creation of the land masses on the earth:

Hereupon all the Heavenly Deities commanded the two Deities His Augustness the Male-Who-Invites and Her Augustness the Female-Who-Invites ordering them to "make, consolidate, and give birth to this drifting land." Granting to them a heavenly jewelled spear, they thus deigned to charge them. So the Two Deities, standing upon the Floating Bridge of Heaven, pushed down the jewelled spear and stirred with it, whereupon, when they had stirred the brine till it went curdle-curdle, and drew the spear up, the brine that dripped down from the end of the spear was piled up and became an island. This is the island of Onogoro.<sup>3</sup>

The two deities then descended upon the island, and their cohabitation produced the eight islands of the Japanese archipelago and various deities besides—the latter apparently some of the nature gods of fire, water, and so on. Izanami died after the birth of a son, whom her husband-brother cut into pieces, and from whose mutilated fragments he formed many natural objects, such as rock masses and promontories. He pursued his wife-sister to the land of the dead, but she was angered and pursued him in turn. When he was at last safe again, he purified himself from his contact with the world of the dead by casting off all his garments and washing in the ocean. Each cast-off article of clothing became a deity (natural force), the washings from his left eye the sun deity and ancestor of the emperor's family, and the washings from his right eye the moon. From various other washings and dismemberments the rest of the physical world is created, the Japanese Islands being finished by the cutting off and sewing on again of various pieces of earth substance to form their capes and peninsulas.

The actual descent of the human race in general is left completely vague, except for the assurance that the people of the Japanese Islands, which are the "center" of the earth, are rather more directly the creation of the gods than others. But from the *Kojiki*, written sometime during the 8th and 9th centuries A.D., and the source of the above quotations, we learn that there is no question about the *emperor's* lineage; he is directly descended from the sun goddess, Heaven-Shining-Great-August-Deity, otherwise called Amaterasu, whose symbol is a mirror; her grandson or great-grandson was the first emperor. He was ordered to take over the rule of the islands, and was charged thus: "Regard the mirror exactly as if it were our august spirit, and reverence it as if reverencing us." <sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 91 f.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

A much later interpreter, speaking of the royal lineage, which has remained unbroken to the present time, wrote:

The Sacred Throne was established at the time when the heavens and the earth became separated. The Emperor is Heaven-descended, divine and sacred; He is pre-eminent above all his subjects. He must be revered and is inviolable.<sup>5</sup>

One further question might be asked: why are the heaven-descended emperor and his people mortal like the rest of mankind? According to Shinto mythology, it all goes back to primordial times, when one of the gods or supermen took home two daughters of another god for wives (he was forced to take the ugly one in order to gain the beautiful one). But shortly he sent the ugly one back again; whereupon the offended father swore that just as his son-in-law had limited his choice to the beautiful daughter, so the splendor and beauty of the earth and the human race should last for only a little time; from then on all of mankind—including the favored people—were mortal.

#### 6. *Likenesses and Differences*

The question whose answers we have been surveying is the same throughout: whence came man and his world? But the answers, as we have seen, have been considerably different. Yet the significance of those differences will escape us unless we note precisely what they are; for here—as elsewhere in religion—it is a difference-in-sameness, not a complete dissimilarity.

One of the most obviously common elements in all the accounts is the presence of a *dualism* in the nature of things—perceived sometimes in the creative process, or elsewhere viewed as characteristic of the stuff of reality itself; that is, nature or reality is divided within itself. There are Chinese Yang-Yin, Hindu creative and destructive power, Zoroastrian darkness and light, Jewish-Christian-Moslem God versus chaos and Satan, and the Japanese conflict among the gods themselves. If we had cared to extend our roster to other religions, like the Greek, Roman, or Babylonian, we should have found there also the same element of disharmony or conflict; they all seem to agree that the world is not a oneness throughout (monism), but in some sense a twoness (dualism). There are thus—at least according to religions—the makings of tragedy deeply woven into the basic world structure itself, in virtue of its inherent disharmony. The important thing to note, however, is not so much this common religious sense of a dualism, but the points at which religions differ in their interpretation of this dualism: how serious is it? is it a basic conflict between cosmic powers, or only a contrasting nature or function? and what is its character—moral, or

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.



metaphysical, or both? These are the questions which fundamentally divide religions, and account for much of their diversity.

Some of the faiths we have surveyed do not appear to take with great seriousness the dualism they find in the world. Observing the contrasts in the world between light and darkness, male and female, life and death, and the like, they come to the common-sensical conclusion that these are but parts of one continuing process, and not to be sharply separated. One may seem to us more evil or distasteful than the other—but then, such is the nature of this world; each has its necessary function. Confucianism and Hinduism are of this persuasion. Confucianism finds in the Yang-Yin contrast not a basic cleavage on the whole, but rather a complementary contrast, a loyal opposition of elements, as it were; darkness and passivity are as necessary to the world as light and activity; they are like two magnetic poles that together compose a dynamic field of force. Hinduism approaches the matter in the same manner—particularly in the case of the gods like Shiva, but also in general throughout its total religious viewpoint. Shiva, as Nature Force, is both creation and destruction, life and death; these two elements must be held together, no matter how strange it may seem to us to call them both divine. Perhaps the fact that they do appear to be bound to each other in the world order, Hinduism suggests, is because fundamentally their opposition or separate existence is not real. This world of contrast, of separate individuals, and of conflict, is not as ultimate or genuine as the world of Brahman, which is undifferentiated oneness. Thus in the end Hinduism does away with the dualism it has discovered in creation, by denying to it any ultimately real existence.

Somewhat the same might be said about Shinto: the struggle of its gods with each other is like the activity of natural elements, which is sometimes destructive but in the end results in new creativity; death makes room for life at every step by destroying old forms. But with the four mid-Eastern religions whose theories have been surveyed (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism), the case is different; the dualism here is more sharply drawn, more fundamental to the universe: it is a real struggle, rather than the contrast of complementary function. Here we have the presence of demonic forces that set themselves over against the good. There is a tension in the universe that cannot be easily solved by the confident assurance that it is not truly real (as in Hinduism), or is always creative in the end (as in Shintoism and Confucianism). Indeed, the conflict at present is so severe that it is faith alone that tells us that good will finally triumph.

And this leads us to the second aspect of this dualism: what is its quality? There is a significant difference here between the faiths we have observed, along the same lines as above: Oriental versus mid-Eastern. The latter stress not only

the seriousness and depth of the dualism found in the creative process, but give it a specifically *moral* character. Though Zoroastrianism is the most extreme in its statement of this quality, it is also in general typical of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; they all maintain that the dualism present in the world process is a moral one, of opposition between good and bad, righteousness and evil, God and the devil. Man must choose on which side he desires to stand, for the world is divided into a black evil versus white righteousness, with no intermediate grays. One remembers this element of absoluteness in Biblical religion: Joshua saying to his people, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve"; Jesus proclaiming, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." And Paul wrote from the midst of his struggle against pagan Rome and hostile Jewry: "For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12, R.S.V.). Man's moral struggle, say these faiths, is an integral part of the same kind of struggle that goes on in the cosmos itself.

The Oriental conception of the quality of this dualism (Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism) is different; the dualism, as they see it, is not only less serious, but it is not specifically a moral one; the distressing elements of the world are not in every case due to the dark or destructive side of the world dualism. To be sure, Buddhism had its Mara or tempter; Confucianism its molesting spirits or *kwei*; and Hinduism many evil forces to work against; but those were mainly important on the level of popular religion; the "official" viewpoint of these faiths is that there is in the nature of things a metaphysical contrast between elements, but not a moral opposition. Its quality is active versus passive, the one World-Soul seeking to reabsorb the many individual human souls into itself, the real spiritual world versus the unreal one of the senses; it is not one of ethical goodness against evil. But the full discussion of this matter must be deferred till we come to consider, in the following chapters, the nature of the world with which we have to do and the problem of evil.

Allied to this dualism is another consideration, which will also be touched on later in other connections. Is there a *world purpose* evident in the beginnings of the creative process? Here the line of demarcation runs very clearly. The Hebrew-Christian, Zoroastrian, and Islamic faiths stand steadfastly on the side of an affirmative answer; "Yes," they would say, "from the very beginning—*before* the very beginning—God had a definite plan in mind for the course of His creation." History is most certainly going somewhere. Hinduism, Shintoism, Confucianism—and Buddhism for that matter—would not be so sure that this is the case. Certainly for Hinduism and Buddhism, history goes in circles, and has no essential significance; and the individual's spiritual destiny—which has little relation to time or space and hence to history—is far more important than



the group destiny, which is essentially a historical affair. Life is a wheel on which the world goes round and round; why it was created, we are not sure; we can only be sure of the method and the worth of release from it; history is to be cured by escaping it. Shintoism and Confucianism, as naturalisms, would think in terms of "process" rather than purposive creation; the primordial forces of nature produced the world as it is, and we live as best we can in it—though the recent introduction of nationalism into Shintoism has emphasized the latent purposive element in its myths of creation; the gods created the Islands, perchance, in order that the favored people might rule over them.

And what is the *place of man* in the order of creation? Here we have what is perhaps the nearest of all our agreements—regardless of other basic differences or of varieties of statement even on this matter. The faiths are practically unanimous in affirming some sort of kinship with the divine. Confucianism is the most meager in its assurance here: man is composed of cosmic elements, is both Yang and Yin, like the earth and nature; he is not as strenuously affirmed to be the lord of creation (under Heaven or God)—as in Judaism, for example. Yet even in Confucianism the good man is characterized by the preponderance in him of the Yang or heavenly element over the Yin. And so the other religions also affirm, even more decidedly; man may be dust, but he is also a living soul breathed into being by God (Judaism); he is less than the gods in power, subject to the cycle of rebirth, yet he is the incarnation of the divine creative force, Purusha (Hinduism). Or it may be—as Shintoism argues—that some special human groups are lineally descended from the gods. Hence, whether we say with Judaism that man is made in the image of God, or with Hinduism that he is the embodiment of a divine principle, or with Shintoism that one's national group is a divine race, all these faiths clearly conceive man to be superior to the remainder of earth's creatures. Typically of them all, the Hebrew Adam could find no true companionship on the earth with any of its inhabitants save his own special kind, and with God. He is the last and best product of God's hand, the nearest to God by nature of all His creatures, unique in his capacities.

Very curiously, however, there is in all these accounts of man a haunting note of tragedy. Creature of God's hand, or embodiment of divine principles, though he may be, somewhere along the line his presumed glorious destiny has in part failed to materialize. His former days were better than his present ones; once he was immortal, now his years are scarcely threescore and ten. In the days of the earth's youth—even after he had lost immortality—he lived longer, was stronger, wiser, and happier than he is now; he was righteous and good then, not sinful and wicked as now. He spoke directly to God and God appeared to him; now there is a veil across God's face. God looked on the new-made world, and it was good; but now it is evil. What has occurred? This

question we can only note here in passing; the answers religions give to it must be discussed later.

Finally, two rather interesting corollaries of these theories of world origins may be noted. One is that just as religions have tended to put man at the top of the pyramid of creation, and conceived the rest of it to have been created for his pleasure and convenience, so our earth has been placed by ecclesiastical geographers in the center of the universe. Probably such a word as "center" no longer has any meaning in this age of relativity; but for the ancient scriptures of all faiths the static universe did have a center, and the earth was it. Nothing has been more difficult for religions than to reorient themselves celestially, in the light of an astronomical knowledge that makes the earth a tiny speck of matter in one "corner" of the universe.

The second may be put in the form of a question: is the earth eternal? Few of the scriptures of these faiths definitely ask this question, or specifically answer it, but in general the following is true: the four mid-Eastern religions tend to think of the universe, including the earth, as limited in time, whereas the Oriental faiths tend to consider the world as eternal. We have noted that the Hebrew account in Genesis is not absolutely clear that there was an absolute nothingness before God began His creative work. This has become the prevalent form of Hebrew, Christian, and Moslem doctrine, however, for with their emphasis on the transcendence of God over His creation and its total dependence on Him, it is most consistent to say: "The world had a definite beginning in time. It is not eternal, for only God is eternal. In the beginning, before the world, was God." (And, as a corollary, God may decide to end the world—just as in the first place He called it into being.) Some Christians, in fact, have been willing to date the beginning of the world quite definitely; Archbishop Ussher some generations ago, it is said, stated that, according to his (Ussher's) best reckoning, God completed His creation somewhere around 9 o'clock on the morning of October 24, 4004 B.C.

By contrast the Oriental versions of creation tend to be vastly indefinite, pushing world origins back far beyond the portals of human time reckoning. Shintoism would seem to suggest that there was a definite era of creation; and so would Hinduism with its world-egg story. Yet obviously both these periods were far removed from the present; nor is there any effort to make the date at all definite. Hinduism, indeed, would have no interest in a definite date; there is a clear tendency here to consider the whole matter in another way, that has only the slightest—if any—reference to history: "creation" is an eternal process, which has nothing to do with a coming into being at any given time; it is simply the eternally dynamic re-creation of new forms, which, for Hinduism, may not be ultimately real at all; for all the visible world and its forms of being



belong to the realm of Maya (unreal or less than completely real), and have no rootage in the eternal Brahman.

### 7. Interpretation

Finally, in what way then shall we interpret the creation stories we find in religion? Perhaps the first reaction of the modern person is to say: "Fairy tales! Obviously mere fantasy!" He will then go on to contrast them with present scientific theories about the history of the solar system, its relation to other astral systems, and with the theories of the origin of life on this earth and its evolution into present forms by processes of natural selection. The net result is often a denial of any serious consideration to all religious accounts. Perhaps we should stir around in this highly colored and scented religious bath water, however, before we throw out the baby of essential truth along with it. And at this point—*i.e.*, with regard to the accounts of creation, where so much religious and scientific friction has developed—we may take occasion to explore a little further the reasons for such a clash.

Obviously a part of the current rejection of religious myth is justified; no one who has any knowledge of scientific findings about the age and history of the earth can longer take very seriously as literal truth the scriptural stories of earth origins. There are, to be sure, some in every faith who insist on such literalness, and fight a last-ditch battle of considerable persistency; but their number is decreasing; there would not be more than a minority of Christians who today would insist on taking the six days of Genesis as six twenty-four-hour periods, or feel obliged to accept Archbishop Ussher's chronology; indeed, centuries before the Archbishop's day, some Church Fathers like Origen and Clement had rejected such literalism. And from our own time the following statement may serve as an example of a modern Christian interpretation:

The Biblical doctrine of the Creator . . . is expressed in a mythical or super-rational idea. Genetically the idea of creation is related to primitive concepts in which God is pictured as fashioning the world as the potter moulds his clay. The Bible retains this "primitive" concept because it preserves and protects the idea of the freedom of God and his transcendence. These are lost or imperilled by the more rational concept of "First cause" . . . and of the concept of a form-giving *now*, which creates by forming the previously formless stuff or matter.<sup>6</sup>

The ease with which such adjustments have been made in religious thought has varied considerably. Hinduism and Buddhism—and Oriental religions in general—have found it rather easier to make adjustment to modern scientific theories than have the Western faiths; the reason has been that their use of language is so elastic, and the mystical element so frequently predominant, that

<sup>6</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Scribner, 1941, Vol. I, p. 133.

they have never taken the original mythologies of world creation too seriously; long ago they considered the terms their scriptures had used about "creation" to be symbolic only. Besides, the content of an "eternal principle" of creation like Purusha or Yang-Yin is much more vague than the idea of a creative God; because less has been less definitely said, less needs to be reinterpreted.

Faiths influenced by the Jewish tradition have found the adjustment more difficult because their statements have been more precise and literal; God has been given a definite character, His actions precise form. And there has been a strong literalistic tendency—most evident in Islam and in Protestant Christianity—which has often rather violently insisted on a Scriptural literalism of an absolute sort. Thus it was that the controversy over evolution, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in English and American Christianity, assumed serious proportions in the minds of many people; Genesis was opposed to Darwin, God-inspired truth set against man-made theory. This is no longer a main-line battle but a bushland skirmish, since it was laughed out of court in the Scopes trial of the 1920's. The line taken by many present-day theologians is to speak of "creative evolution," or of evolution as God's *method* of creativity, open to scientific investigation.

Difficult though the adjustment has been, however, it has largely been made. Though this has eased the sharpness of the difficulty, some of its substance still remains; and one must still inquire: of what value are such accounts as the creation stories with which religions present us? Is there any truth of any sort in them that is worth keeping? Let us bear in mind here what was earlier said about the nature of religious language: that it seeks to go beyond the borders of certain knowledge of the more limited sort, and in doing so must take the poetic or mythical form. We there observed that all disciplines of thought that try for complete or systematic accounts of the world are forced to the same device, whenever they go beyond the most limited kind of discussion. We have, then, in these creation myths a religious intuition—in crude form perhaps—couched in the language of the time of their writing, and given poetically symbolic form. But here also is an area in which our best scientific knowledge cannot speak meaningfully. It may describe some secondary mechanical processes, like the physical origin of the earth's mass, or the mutation of one type of living creature into another; but about the beginning of the beginning, or whether there is purpose or meaning to that creation, or the spiritual and moral relation of man to it, we must intuit as did our fathers—though with more ability to spell out the details and implications of our intuitions than they possessed.

If such questions cannot be answered by our definite techniques of knowledge, then why should we concern ourselves with them? probably because we cannot help doing so. Wishing to orient ourselves to the total universe in which



we live—for such is the religious drive—we are not content to be limited to the small area of physical knowledge science gives us; that is not sufficient for our happiness, or for our life as thinking and feeling persons; therefore we push our thoughts and concerns on toward ultimates.

Or perhaps it might be stated in reverse fashion (certainly the religious man would so state it). *The realm of the ultimate, or more-than-physical, pushes in on man, and will not let him rest content with the purely physical*; it makes demands on him as a living person that he cannot fulfill within the range and power of his absolutely certain scientific knowledge. He is forced to act—whether he wishes to or not—as if there were another world than the sheerly physical one. He has intuitions, insights, and intimations of this other world of moral and spiritual values; or, in the language of some religions, this spiritual world “reveals” itself to him.

So it is that religion may be viewed as man’s attempt to live in the full awareness of both these worlds at once; hence its tensions and difficulties in the “practical” world. For religion is the assertion that not only is there a world of spiritual reality, but that it ought to control and permeate life on the physical level. And what shall be the attitude of science to this other unseen world of spiritual reality and value? It may rightly insist that religion has no ability to speak authoritatively about the patterns and systems to be found in the world of physical reality, and flatly deny such religious pronouncements—*e.g.*, as to the age of the earth—when they seem to be factually erroneous; but it cannot dogmatically assert that there is no meaning or reality beyond that revealed by the narrow range of data with which it works. If the religious intuition of more-than-physical values gives wider range and greater scope to human life by including all scientific findings in a wider spiritual context, science is properly unable to deny the validity of the religious insight.

What insights do the creation stories give, then, that may be of value to us who are acquainted with the world process as science has described it? One is their apprehension of the world as *orderly process*. They have expressed in different ways the kind of order found—some as the incarnation of impersonal creative principle, and others as formation and guidance by the will of a personal God; but they have been agreed that the net result is order of an intelligible or spiritual sort; things and creatures have not come into being by happenstance, but according to a pattern, and perhaps for a purpose.

Here we may draw a contrast between science and religion. Science also speaks of order, and indeed has been the most persistent advocate of extending its systems of orderliness both to the smallest and to the most immense reaches of physical reality—to the subatomic and the stellar; it has been able to apply mathematical terms to all this vast range of physical reality. It would emphat-

ically agree with religion, both in terms of life's development from the "beginning" and in terms of present conditions, that order does indeed characterize the world. The question at issue between it and the religious accounts is what *sort* of order we must consider the cosmos to demonstrate most basically; here is perhaps where the possibility of conflict is greatest. For physical science deals with order exclusively in mechanical and mathematical terms; and because of its narrow scope of interest it sometimes assumes that there is no other quality to this order than that with which it deals.

Religion, on the other hand, conceives the essential quality of the order that characterizes the world to be spiritual and moral. It holds that the physical unity of the universe represents a mechanical aspect of that order, but is not the depth or fullness of it; that depth is a kind of intellectual or spiritual cohesion, of which the physical is but the outer garment. There is an inner bond between man and his world deeper than his dependence on it for his physical being; there is a spiritual compatibility between the two—a demand on the part of the universe that man must fulfill, a personal response that he must make to it. He apprehends this more-than-physical unity of the world through his appreciative faculties, and through the moral obligations which seem to be laid on him by a spiritual presence. This is what religion means by saying that the world was made by God, is bound together by a spiritual life force, or that God has revealed Himself in it.

Indeed, we may go further—in the name of religion—to suggest that the order of the spirit and the intellect is more inclusive than the physical order, and perhaps *necessary* to it; this has at least been the doctrine of many philosophers and the common belief of many religions. Does not the scientific conviction of the unity of the world with which it deals, and its faith that its mechanical categories will apply to all reality of every sort, suggest a kind of rational coherence or system that underlies the physical uniformity? How else is it that the mind of man can deal so readily and systematically with his world, and think of it as a *universe*? And it is noteworthy that historically speaking modern science arose in a culture which had as its fundamental doctrine the unity of God and His rational governance of the world. It is true that this basic faith has long since been lost sight of, or been submerged under a deep covering of practical techniques; but it appears to have been the only kind of subsoil in which the scientific method could grow to maturity and maintain itself. Therefore we repeat that while it may well be beyond the domain of science to affirm the existence of that spiritual world order, or God, which is asserted by religion, it is also beyond its capacity to deny such an existence.

One other insight of peculiar worth comes out of these early stories of world origins: there is a special sort of self-consciousness on the part of man, a *dis-*



*inctive sense of spiritual destiny*, that is found nowhere else. Now biological and physical sciences emphasize the fact that man is physically the creature of his environment—an integral part of the biological and physical orders of being; psychology and sociology insist that man, particularly in his early phases, is the product, in mind and spirit, of the personal and social forces of his environment; one cannot step out of these contexts, they declare, any more than he can jump out of his own skin.

But in their creation myths religions have almost uniformly added something to this; we shall observe this more at length when we consider the nature of man and his destiny; here we may say that religions have attributed to men a divine origin, as we have abundantly seen, and placed man "above" the rest of creation. No doubt it is a little dizzying in height to be called a "son of God," an embodiment of the supreme spiritual essence. And there are those like the Vedantist who are willing to say that God is in man, if he will but see Him. Yet there is an important point here that must not be missed—even if we dissent from some of the language used by some religions; it is that man senses within himself a spiritual and moral destiny that marks him out as different from the rest of creation. He feels his difference from other creatures in his unique self-consciousness; there is nothing like it in the natural world. And the religious statement of divine origin represents man's adamant refusal to surrender this sense of his own peculiar nature and quality for anything less. He is convinced that however he arrived—whether by evolution or creation—he bears the unique stamp of a higher power that calls him not merely to a feeling of pride, but to a unique kind of creative freedom and spiritual responsibility. His own spiritual nature persuades him that there is a spiritual quality pervading that process or universe that produced him—else whence came his own such quality, and why else does he find a spiritual demand made on him by that universe?

Such, then, are the insights of religion into the nature of the world process and man's place in it. They cannot in their ultimate terms be verified—or disproved—by science, though if they are taken as descriptive of physical fact or historical occurrence, their literal formulations may well be denied. But they go beyond the range of scientific competency, and deal with the ultimate valuation a man puts on his world and his world puts on him. Science may well provide some valuable guidance as to what man *can do* physically, in such a world as this; but it cannot well prescribe what a man *ought to be* in such a world as religious faith discovers, or dogmatically declare that there is no such world.

## Chapter XXVI

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### WITH WHAT OR WHOM HAVE WE TO DO? WITH AN ENVIRONING SPIRITUAL REALITY

The religious quest for understanding, which begins by asking about world and human origins, is only a beginning; once such a quest is begun there is no definite boundary at which we can draw the journey to a close before we have visited several other territories. We found, for example, as we sought to understand the creation stories of differing religions and to compare them with each other, that we were inevitably involved in new considerations. According to those accounts, the creation took place as a result of opposing forces. "Opposing in what sense? how deeply divided were they?" we asked, and found ourselves immediately entangled with questions about the nature of the universe, the kind of unity that characterizes it, and the like. Again, we observed that all religions allow man the benefit of a divine origin, a high place in creation, but also recognize an actual, historical, come-short-of-glory performance. Why and how should man be said to differ from other creatures—or to be like the Divine Power? why has man failed; and what are then his prospects? we go on to ask. Thus we are at once involved in questions about human nature and destiny, the problems of evil and sin.

Having begun our journey into understanding with an inquiry about origins, we must then proceed another step. The next logical one would seem to be the extension of the first question from the past on into the present. This world, which once got started in some way or other by an organizing power—what is its true nature? If we follow up the clues gained there, with what or whom have we to do, ultimately, in our dealings with the present world?

Let us remember that here, too, religion is essentially practical; its interest in the nature of the present world is part of its concern with salvation. Just as it is concerned to gain whatever light an inquiry into the beginnings of life might throw on the human lot, so also it is concerned to know what sort of ultimate reality it is with which human beings have to deal; only thus can it determine the course men must take for the achieving of their salvation and the serving



of their own true welfare—otherwise their most valiant struggles would be but ignorant battling in the dark. Here, as before, the answers that religions give such questions vary considerably; and the nature of these answers is not only of the utmost importance for our understanding of the total character of any religion, but also for our estimation of its true worth.

### 1. *The Primitive Answer: Reality Is Mysterious Power*

In general we may say that primitives have a less developed scheme of the universe than the more advanced faiths. As we have noted, some primitive peoples have little interest, and next to no theory, about the ultimate nature of the world; or perhaps we can say better: they subconsciously accept certain views of the universe that are embedded in or unconsciously implied by their rites and social patterns. Indeed, the social culture handed down to them has itself the quality of a "natural" reality—is an ordered pattern of living as much a part of the real world as the clouds or rocks. The Hopi Indian would no doubt be nonplused if he were asked whether his ritual "corresponded to the real world"; for him the two are one—neither is understandable apart from the other. Though they have never explored the philosophic implications of totem reverence, the Australian aborigines let the pattern of living and thinking it prescribes for them mold all their relations to the universe. In such cultures the nature of the world pattern is implied, but not dealt with intellectually.

How, then, can we characterize the nature of reality that such patterns imply, if it has never been stated? Mainly by trying to understand something of the meaning of those terms they do use about it, or by analyzing the world concept their attitudes seem to imply. We have noted the rather general primitive conception of mana or its equivalent; what can we say about mana, if that is the aspect under which primitives conceive the reality with which they have to do? It is scarcely a "reality" in the sense of a being or substance; it is rather more the way in which an object or person acts, or his potency for action. Somewhat like invisible electricity—though presumably omnipresent—it is concentrated here or there more heavily than at other spots. Nor can we say that it is distinctly personal or impersonal, for it may be in persons or things, spirits or objects, but only that it is more-than-physical, or other-than-physical, power.

The transition to animism, where it has occurred, is therefore rather gradual, and the result often a mingled product. Animism, of course, is a first attempt to conceive reality in personalistic terms; indeed, we should be tempted to say, from our modern viewpoint, that it is an overdone attempt by which every object, of even the most inanimate appearance, is peopled with one or more spirits whose activities explain its characteristics. While, according to animism, such

objects may be dealt with in a purely mechanical way—as when stones are carried off a cultivated field by the farmer—as a rule they must also be dealt with in spiritual terms—psychologically persuaded by magic rite, as it were. But side by side with this somewhat personalistic way of thinking about reality, the impersonal mana concept may also be found; indeed, the two merge into each other without much difficulty, since both are vaguely and indefinitely conceived.

It is obvious that at this stage the foremost ingredient of divinity is conceived to be power—*i.e.*, power is divine. Or, to put it in reverse order: *the divine is power*. It is on the basis of the potency of a man, object, natural force, or magic formula that primitive man decides that it is divine or sacred—not on its goodness or moral character; what he expects to worship is what he believes has the greatest actual brute force in the world as it is. Sometimes it requires a careful balancing of strengths and weaknesses, and the elaboration of a compromise method by which he can placate several powers simultaneously without seriously offending any one of them; but his intention is to get on the side with the most power. The spirits he worships are indeed scarcely personal in the real sense; they are but slightly personalized powers or natural forces, who are known by what they do rather than by any intrinsic personal character of their own. The spirit of a stream, for instance, is the stream's manner of acting—neither much more nor less.

It is also obvious that there is only a very rudimentary sort of order in the primitive's version of the cosmos. Such cultures seldom have any stories of the beginnings of the world, because this would require a type of systematic thinking of which the primitive is not capable. Things happen rather haphazardly, with many unforeseeable accidents by the way, though the ritual pattern inherited from the ancestors does give a measure of stability; and an individual shaman or medicine man may persuade his clientele that he has the universe pretty well in hand—for a consideration. But on the whole it is a disorderly and varied world, not a unified one, in which the primitive lives. The powers with which he has to deal are personal and impersonal, seen and unseen, of no predictably certain character or disposition. The best that he can hope for is a day-to-day security achieved by the best available compromises.

This mixture of the personal and impersonal, mana-animistic conception of reality may continue long in the history of religions; indeed, we may say that at least three of the religions we have dealt with in various connections are examples of the persistence of the primitive on into a generally higher range of culture. This is true of Japanese Shintoism, and with Chinese religion in its Taoist and Confucian forms; neither culture spent much energy attempting a religious philosophy or theological speculation. China's best energies went into the elaboration of a code of ethics and a social pattern; Japanese thought re-



mained largely primitive until the recent past, when Western technology was thrust suddenly and overpoweringly on the nation. Whatever theological thinking was done was carried on mainly under the auspices of Buddhism; but Buddhism has always been much more of a practical discipline of salvation or an individualistic moral code than a system of world philosophy. Thus, somewhat by default, both Chinese and Japanese native religions have remained on a rather primitive level, despite envioning cultures that are in other areas much farther advanced and quite highly sophisticated.

Consequently the parallels to (or perhaps the remnants of) the primitive attitude toward the universe are easily observed in the religio-philosophical views of these otherwise more advanced cultures. The Taoist's reverence for the universe, and his sense of vague harmony with it, have much of the quality of the primitive's feeling about mana-force; both view it as personal-impersonal, something to be instinctively worked with rather than reasoned about. And, significantly, Taoism finally degenerated into a kind of primitive magic, whose priest-magicians concocted mixtures and said charms that would guarantee long, even eternal, life, protection from bullets (in the Boxer rebellion), and enable the possessor to fly on the wind.

So also with Shinto and Confucian religion: both are a thinly disguised worship of purely natural forces. Neither attributes any real personal quality to its gods; they are functions, offices, forces—not beings of will and purpose. Only with great difficulty and a somewhat forced interpretation were Christian missionaries able to find a word for God in the language of China, by using "T'ien" (Heaven). The most truly personal beings to be found in either Chinese or Japanese religion, in fact, were the demons and good spirits of popular religion, or perhaps the spirits of the ancestors—not the great powers of the universe. And so it is that neither culture has contributed largely to religious or philosophical conceptions of the nature of the universe, because each has retained the basic primitive ideology with regard to it.

## 2. *Polytheism's Answer: Reality Is Many*

Polytheisms—of which there have been a great number—represent the next stage above primitive animism in the development of systematic conceptions of the nature of reality. As we have observed, many religions did not pass through this period, some remaining below it in primitivism, some being born monotheistic; nonetheless it is an interesting and widespread pattern, in which the confusion of the primitive is partly but not completely overcome. It is something of a compromise between the nonsystematic irregularity of the primitive and the unified system of the monotheist.

Polytheism, then, is a field of struggle between two opposing tendencies in religious life: the desire to hold on to a concrete variety of religious conception and expression, and the opposing drive for unity. The former tendency accounts for the creation and retention in polytheism of the colorful and varied ritual pattern, as well as its multiple concept of deity; it represents an unwillingness to dispense with any possible concrete manifestation of more-than-human power. Yet there is not alone a love of diversity to be found here; there is also the pull of unity—the growing desire to find more system than is yielded by the confused patterns of primitive thought and action. For how can man deal successfully with reality, or achieve a sure salvation, if he does not have some major clue or pattern of order to guide him? And do not both nature and human society suggest such system? For nature, even though diverse, does have a certain order within it; and as culture emerges from the primitive stage, the ever-growing tribes and national groups begin to organize themselves more systematically into ordered ranks of political power, and to achieve larger unities. Might not this be suggestive of a like system of more-than-human powers to be found within the world?

Thus polytheism comes up with a compromise solution embodying something in its world scheme of both unity and variety, of the personal and the impersonal. The world is a stage on which various forces and beings play their parts, in a more or less organized fashion; some gods are chief actors, others of moderate importance, and still others—mere godlings—play character bits. To use the political analogy: the world of the gods—and hence reality—is organized like a king's court, with the chief at the top, then his lieutenants, and finally the errand boys and girls—to whom one may look for small favors but not for the major ordering of his life. Interestingly enough, polytheisms—even though found for the most part in monarchical countries—did not always take the form of a single-ruler despotism; perhaps this was because the gods and their traditions were already established before political absolutisms took over. For example, though Zeus was supreme among the Greek gods, he was closely flanked by his consort Hera, and his son and daughter, Apollo and Athena. A trinity of gods—though in no sense the same as the Christian Trinity—is a favorite arrangement: among the Romans it was Jove, with Juno his wife and Minerva on either hand; among the Assyrio-Babylonians, Anu, Enlil, and Ea, or later Shamash (sun), Sin (moon), and Ishtar (fertility); and in Hinduism, Brahmā (personalized form of Brahman) the Creator, Shiva the Destroyer, and Vishnu the Preserver. These reigned over the hosts of lesser gods and spirits.

Or we may divide the gods into classes according to their divergent functions or domains. There are gods of the sun, moon, stars, the winds, the ocean, the



storm or thunderbolt, mountain or volcano; there are gods and goddesses of fertility, of the harvest, of the storehouse; there are the patrons of the hunt, sports, athletics, and war. The list is endless, and varies considerably among different peoples, with the Greeks and Romans perhaps showing the most systematic organization in their celestial affairs. Nor are the functions always kept clearly separate; they tend to overlap, and to change as political life changes, or as several are concentrated in one god. Apollo of the Greeks, for example, was perhaps originally a shepherd and agricultural god, protecting flocks and crops; but he was also the archer whose arrows dealt disease and death, the god of the prophetic oracle at Delphi, and later became the sun god for the Hellenic Greeks. Among the Babylonians, Marduk rose to supreme if not solitary rulership among the gods; he came to overshadow the ancient trinities, because the city of which he was patron (Babylon) rose to world power and in its triumph took him along with it. He, rather than any of the trinities, became in time the creator of the earth, and the one to whom all the other gods looked as chief.

But another interesting characteristic makes its appearance here: the *anthropomorphic* or manlike; the polytheistic gods are not merely natural forces, as in primitivism; nor are they anonymous spirits or mere functions: they are also persons, with distinctive personal characteristics. The Greeks especially were prone to such characterization of their gods—though some of this was due to the poetic embellishments of Homer, and hence a literary artifact rather than a religious creation. They were given human shape—heads, hands, feet, eyes, and so forth—though they also became visible or invisible to men at will. Vulcan was lame, Apollo was golden, Athene gray-eyed and armor clad. They were associated in families; Zeus, for example, was considered to be the father of most of the Olympic gods, and of the same family as the other earth gods. The gods were human in character as well—loving, hating, despising, envying, quarreling, and warring among themselves; they even descended to backing one human group against another, and to lusting after human women.

This humanization never became complete, however; for in addition to their human-appearing foibles there was an awesome "otherness" or strangeness about the gods. Their angers were tremendous and their struggles cosmic in scope; human beings would do well to avoid taking sides among them, lest they be trampled under foot in the battles between these titans. There was also something about them of the hugely impersonal quality of the forces of nature, which could not—at least in matters of major importance—be stayed or cajoled. And superior to them all—in a dark, obscure sort of way—were the fates or "Moirai," who inexorably wove the web of the future even for the gods. In other polytheisms it was the same blend of varied elements: Rudra-Shiva and Kali of the Hindus were neither completely human nor nonhuman, nor abso-

lutely one nor completely severed from each other, but something of all these in a confusing mixture of love and hate, creative and destructive power; the Egyptians, too, made their gods composite creatures—part animal, part human, part cosmic.

It now becomes evident that though polytheism had overcome some of the primitive disorder and uncertainty in its thinking about the world, it had not been entirely successful; it achieved greater unity, but not a thorough unification. The organization among the forces that govern the world was not complete; Zeus got some back-talk, and even rank disobedience, from his family. There was considerable confusion as to function, prerogative, or area governed by each god, despite a relatively stable over-all order. This resulted in a confused worship also. A man might appeal from one god to another; or curry favor with one and neglect a second, in the hope that he had picked the more powerful god to back. Nor could polytheism quite make up its mind as to whether its gods were completely personal or only partly so; it sometimes even pitted the personal against the impersonal in the inner being of a god himself. Polytheism was never satisfactory religiously, therefore, because the worshiper never knew where he stood ultimately, with what or whom it paid to be in high favor, or, in the final analysis, with what or whom he had to do—to say nothing of the intellectual disorder inherent in such a world scheme.

This failure to achieve a satisfactory unity is reflected in the moral sphere as well. At a time when men were seeking to organize their moral and social standards according to some scale of values, the gods were of no help. Their moral standards were no higher than those of men; indeed, if we take the Greek gods for an example, their greater powers enabled them to do many deeds that among men were considered evil. The gods and their immoralities became a scandal, in fact, among the later Greeks—derided by their dramatists and scorned by their philosophers. In any case, polytheism offered no general or absolute moral standard, even when its gods were on their good behavior; for the standard followed by one god might not be that of another; and in the final analysis which of them was right?

### 3. *The Hindu Compromise: Reality Is Both One and Many*

Though Hinduism, to outward appearances, is simply a polytheism, and might be regarded as having been disposed of in the above discussion, it is a very special case that merits particular consideration; for Hinduism is a peculiar mixture of religious elements in which the decision between polytheism and monotheism, or between monotheism and monism, has never been fully made. Its whole history as a religion might be looked upon as a running battle, with



the issues among these forces still unresolved; in fact, it is a battle that is still going on in modern India.

This is what makes it so difficult, as we have noted before, to say anything about Hinduism that cannot be immediately countered with an example of the opposite sort. What one interpreter says about the classic Upanishads might be said about Hinduism in general:

So numerous their suggestions of truth, so various are their guesses at God, that almost anybody may seek in them what he wants and find what he seeks, and every school of dogmatics may congratulate itself on finding its own doctrine in the sayings of the Upanishads.<sup>1</sup>

Yet Hinduism is not complete chaos—at least not in practice—nor quite in general viewpoint either. Few Hindus will kill a cow, and most of them have an aversion to physical violence. They reverence the Vedas—no matter what their interpretations of them—and are unified socially by the religious caste system, though in decreasing degree. And intellectually there is more unity than the surface suggests: for Hindu philosophy ends in religion; it is a search for salvation-bringing knowledge, so that sharply diverging philosophers are brothers under the skin. A Hindu atheist and theist, a Hindu philosophical materialist and idealist, are still more like each other in attitude and reaction to fundamental problems than like a Western philosopher of the “same” intellectual viewpoint. The diverse outward forms of religion remain distinct through the ages; but the flexible philosophic genius of India has honeycombed them with its interpretations in such a way that one inner passageway leads unexpectedly to another of the same sort in the supposedly alien territory of an opposing viewpoint or divergent religious practice; and all this with the greatest of ease, and with no sense of inconsistency. This is to say that there is an inner spirit of unity pervading Hinduism that is stronger than its diversities. It unites Hindus against Christian and Mohammedan monotheism, lifts them above the most primitive polytheism, and makes them oppose Western technical materialism and secularism—even though there might be many whose outward practices would indicate an alliance with each of these outside influences.

It is of both these factors of outward diversity and inward unity that we speak when we consider the nature of Indian thought about Supreme Reality, and say that Hinduism has never made up its mind between polytheism and monotheism on the one hand, nor monotheism (the world ruled by one personal will or purpose) and monism (the world made up of one impersonal substance) on the other. To be sure, there are forms of all these in Hinduism. There are those who are outright polytheists; yet many in these same groups favor one god to the nearly complete exclusion of all the others. The bhakti

<sup>1</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Allen & Unwin, 1927, Vol. I, p. 140.

devotees are practicing monotheists, yet their monotheism shades off into the acknowledgment of the reality of other gods; and even the gods they worship, Rama and Krishna, are only avatars (*i.e.*, human embodiments) of Vishnu. Indeed, any saint in India may rather easily become a god, even in his own lifetime—as witness Ramakrishna.

And, considering themselves somewhat superior to these active devotees of particular cults, there are the philosopher-mystics who decry all names and specific religious creeds as mere illusory appearances of the impersonal oneness of the world—produced by the peculiarities of the observer not by the qualities of that ultimate oneness itself; yet, whatever their beliefs, they easily drop into the common ritual practices of ordinary popular religion.

What then can we say about the Hindu idea of reality? Is reality one or many? personal or impersonal? Hinduism does not know her own mind, and so has kept something of everything—as in a well-stocked attic. As for the question of one or many gods, perhaps the best phrase to use would be “pantheistic polytheism,” even though it seems self-contradictory; because the term does justice both to the one-God-in-many-forms of pantheism, and to the many-gods-of-like-form of polytheism. If the result is confusing, so is Hinduism.

As to the ultimate nature of this reality—whether it be considered as personal or impersonal—we may perhaps term it “theistic monism.” Again, this is an equivocal phrase, which seems to say something definite in one half but definitely deny it in the other. For how can reality be at the same time personal being and impersonal substance? Even if it be “mind-stuff,” a completely general and everywhere-present mental substance is scarcely an individual personal being such as the theist usually means by the term “God.” Yet the phrase is reasonably accurate. Consider the word “Brahman,” for example; it originates from a grammatical root meaning “to swell or grow,” and referred originally in the Vedas to the impersonal power of prayer. The writers of the Upanishads took this neuter form and used it to designate the highest reality of the universe—the impersonal eternal oneness of ultimate existence that the mystic aspires to experience in this life and to be absorbed into, world without end, in the next. In its masculine form, Brahmā, the word refers to the ancient creator-god, the sovereign lord of the universe, who appears in the pages of sacred art and statuary and has a few temples dedicated to him. (Besides this there are the derived meanings of Brahman or Brahmin to designate the priestly caste, and the Brahmanas, which are a series of writings for priestly instruction only slightly less ancient than the Vedas.) Now what does India truly mean by its varied use of this word? Is Brahman to be thought of as a largely impersonal World Essence, Absolute, or World-Soul, who is above or beyond personality,



right and wrong, or any kind of description? Or is he Brahṁā, a personal god and the quintessence of personal selfhood?

As a matter of fact, Hinduism is not certain which of these it intends to say; different groups say different things, and the personal or impersonal quality of the various statements depends somewhat on the context. A modern interpreter of Hinduism states the matter thus:

Personality is a limitation, and yet only a personal God can be worshipped. . . . Personality implies the distinction of self and not-self, and hence is inapplicable to the Being who includes and embraces all that is. The personal God is a symbol, though the highest symbol of the true living God . . . if God is perfect, (*i.e.*, the all-inclusive Absolute) religion is impossible; if God is imperfect, religion is ineffective. We cannot have with a finite limited God the joy of peace, the assurance of victory and the confidence in the ultimate destiny of the universe. True religion requires the Absolute. Hence to meet the demands of both popular religion and philosophy the Absolute is indiscriminately called He or It.<sup>2</sup>

This conception of God as perhaps both personal and impersonal at the same time is made possible by the Hindu conception of the nature of personality and its relation to the world. The Hindu is at once almost completely preoccupied with the inner self in his religion and philosophy, yet finds it easy to think of that self in an impersonal way. From the time of the Upanishads, the inner world of the self has been the constant theme of philosophic and religious thought. Turning away from the objective, outer polytheism of the Vedic sacrificial religion, the philosopher saw the inner self "as the keyhole to the landscape of the whole universe."<sup>3</sup> Impressed by the presence of change and decay in the visible world, he turned to the inner self and its pure consciousness as the only truly enduring entity; he discovered in the concept of a purely spiritual or mental knower, "behind" the act of knowing—and more than its own states of emotion or knowledge—the clue to reality.

But it must be emphasized that it is only the self in a certain state or condition that furnishes such a clue. Four states of self-consciousness are to be distinguished, says the Hindu: First, the state of wakefulness, or the ordinary state of consciousness of the world about us. Second, a state of "dreaming"—or perhaps better, day-dreaming—in which "the self enjoys subtle things, fashions for itself a new world of forms with the materials of its waking experience." Third, one of sound sleep (deep trance), "where we have neither dreams nor desires," and where the spirit "dwells in a region far above the changeful life of sense in absolute union with Brahman." Fourth, the positive

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 97.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

climactic state (of ecstasy), which is a "pure intuitional consciousness, where there is no knowledge of objects external."

Now it is in this final state of consciousness, the Hindu holds, that the self gains the most trustworthy apprehension of what reality truly is. In such a trance the self is unaware of the physical world about it, unaware of itself as a distinct person or separate individual; yet it has a vivid sense of being one with all knowledge and all being without the necessity of explicit thought or mental effort. Thus does Hinduism describe the ultimate reality (Brahman) which it knows in trance:

It is unseen, transcendent, inapprehensible, unferrable, unthinkable, indescribable, the sole essence of the consciousness of self, the completion of the world, the ever peaceful, all blissful. . . .<sup>4</sup>

So it is that Hinduism arrives at its conviction about reality: found in the depths of self-consciousness, pure thinking without thoughts, subject without object; it is at once deeply personal and yet lacks all distinctively personal or individual form. It is a suprapersonal oneness, yet it can be experienced only in the most private and intensely personal form of awareness. In the end it would seem, however, that the quality of It-ness prevails over the quality of He-ness; for in its ultimate nature the experience of Brahman blots out or absorbs personal consciousness, as we know it, into something quite different.

#### 4. *Buddhist Nihilism: Reality Is Nothingness—or Is It?*

Strictly speaking, Buddhism never had a genuine, full-fledged theory of the universe—especially in its early forms; what theories it had were undercover ones, in the nature of assumptions seldom made explicit. We have already noted the reason for this. For Buddha the Middle Way he proclaimed was a practical way of salvation from suffering; no man had time to battle over words to describe metaphysical ideas, when he needed to be saved. And still further, he found that very soul or self, which Hinduism stressed as the one truly permanent entity in a universe of change, to be the most impermanent of all entities. Its five elements (*skandhas*) are: material substance, feeling, perception, willing activity, and consciousness. But insubstantial as the component elements may be, they are more permanent than their fleeting combination in a self, because the combination is not only brief but also varies in quality. For does not consciousness—which is the basic evidence for selfhood—change completely from moment to moment and from condition to condition? How, then, can we get a philosophy of world substance from such a doubly negative view, which recognizes only a "not-soul," and takes only a negative interest in the world of reality?

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 159 f.



To make a bad matter worse, there were those of Buddha's disciples who went on from his original position of saying simply, "I do not know or do not care to discuss metaphysical ultimates," to a completely nihilistic interpretation of his teaching. Nagarjuna developed the doctrine of the "Void," that is, abyss or emptiness. In his teaching, the pervasive Buddhist conviction of the impermanence of the world of the senses was extended to everything. Try to describe the world, said Nagarjuna, and your terms contradict each other. There is no cause without an effect, or effect without a cause; threads do not exist without cloth, nor cloth without threads; a father cannot exist without a son, and yet how can there be a son without a father? There is no real substance (reality) in anything—only relatedness. And this we may extend even to the teachings of the faith. There is, in the final analysis, no being nor becoming, no suffering nor release from suffering, no Buddha, no Way, no Nirvana. All this is Maya or illusion; and maybe even the doctrine of the Void itself is but illusion—as well as our conversation about it.

Though Nagarjuna's doctrines were never widely accepted in their most radical form, the doctrine of the Void has not passed out of the Buddhist vocabulary, and has exerted a considerable influence. It has tended to inhibit the growth of explicit Buddhist theories of the world; most Buddhism even in the modern world does not consider that its truth depends on any particular world theory, and it has largely avoided any efforts in that direction. And some modern forms of Buddhism—notably Zen Buddhism in Japan—find themselves quite in sympathy with the most radical formulations of Nagarjuna's doctrinal nihilism.

Zen emphasizes bodily and mental discipline; intellectual ideas about the world are of no help. A contemporary interpreter of Zen even goes so far as to suggest that perhaps definite ideas in the area of religious practice are a hindrance rather than a help:

In Christianity we seem to be too conscious of God, though we say that in Him we live and move and have our being. Zen wants to have even this last trace of God-consciousness, if possible, obliterated. That is why Zen followers advise us not to linger even where the Buddha is and to pass quickly away where he is not.<sup>5</sup>

And a devotee thus describes the Zen process of illumination, whose net result seems to be the realization of a condition of complete mental emptiness or the Void:

At first . . . the beginner is given an object for thought in the form of an enigmatic question, in order to keep his mind on a tight stretch. But at last the heavens open and he sees beyond. In this condition one asks oneself, What do I

<sup>5</sup> D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, Harper, 1949, p. 350.

see? What do I hear? What do I feel? What am I? His conclusion is that he sees nothing, hears nothing, feels nothing, is nothing.<sup>6</sup>

This vision of nothingness would then be what the Buddhist, particularly if he follows out the strictest of Buddhist principles, finds at the end of the way as his vision of ultimate reality; his final attainment is a sort of religiously minded agnosticism.

But is Buddhism truly as nihilistic as this? Actually it has not been so historically, for the most part. We have already observed that Buddha himself accepted much of the apparatus of the doctrines of Karma and rebirth; though he never stated them explicitly, his whole scheme of salvation is based on the assumption of their truth. It is also true that from time to time Buddhist doctrines about the world have appeared which have sounded considerably like those of some other religions we have observed. Yet, after all is said, these elements have been in the periphery—not at the center of the Buddhist faith; therefore the question still remains: does the central Buddhist doctrine of release into Nirvana, the calmness and coolness of the going out of life's feverish thirst, offer any positive elements for world structuring?

The answer would seem to be yes; that in the Nirvanic experience we have essentially the Hindu experience of trance consciousness, which in Hinduism is taken as indicative of the essential quality of reality. Buddhist preparation for this experience—which we described under the mystic techniques of salvation—is the same: withdrawal of consciousness from one's environment. And the experience of a state of pure consciousness, undisturbed by outer sensation or explicit inner thoughts or emotions, is almost identical in both. Thus, though the Buddhist adherent of the doctrine of the Void, or the modern Zen Buddhist, would not be willingly trapped into describing this mental emptiness as metaphysically real, by saying, "That is the essence of reality!" yet his words and actions suggest that this is his *real* meaning. The Zen abbot quoted earlier goes on to say that the nothingness that the Zen illumination brings is "no mere blank or negation. It is like waking from a dream." Later one will realize as a kind of after effect of the vision that he was "in accord with the laws of the universe," or near to God. The old world, *i.e.*, of ordinary experience, becomes a new one, transformed by the luminous quality of the new insight.

Thus, though the Buddhist be outwardly agnostic, or even nihilistic in theory, practically and experientially he is not. The Nirvanic or illuminating experience gives him a vital clue to action; in that state of being he has touched a reality beyond words, and he must accord himself to it in his living; there, in his utter detachment from sense and passion, he finds the key to world meaning, whether he can describe it or not; it is calm and peaceful oneness of being, far

<sup>6</sup> J. B. Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism*, p. 640.



above all the turmoil of petty individual likes and dislikes or the trammels of personality itself, and infinitely more real than the physical world about him. Indeed, we have some warrant for this interpretation from the Enlightened One himself: he was reported as saying, even out of his deep reticence on such matters:

There is an unborn, an unoriginated, an unmade, an uncompounded; were there not, O mendicants, there would be no escape from the world of the originated, the made, the compounded.<sup>7</sup>

##### 5. *Judaism, Christianity, Islam: Reality Is a Universe Governed by Conscious Purpose*

In these three faiths we finally come to the clearest and most distinctive answer religions have given to the question: with what or whom have we to do? Their answer is unequivocally: it is a *whom*, not a *what*, with which we have to do; ultimate reality is basically personal, or at least directed by a conscious purpose. In the fullest sense of these words, God is a being Who *thinks*, *wills*, and *feels* in a way somewhat analogous to ours; and this physical world is the instrument of His purposes.

We might well include Zoroastrianism in this same group, but we leave it aside for two reasons: one, its monotheism became somewhat clouded in its later form by the appearance of an increasingly elaborate host of heavenly beings and counterhosts of demonic beings; Ahura Mazda tended to sink from his high, near-monotheistic position back into the status of being pre-eminent among several other near-gods—a position he had occupied in Persian religion before Zoroaster's coming. The other reason is that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are closely tied together historically; they originated within the same general geographical area, were originally Semitic in character, and actually form a family of religions: Christianity is daughter to Judaism (though changed considerably since it got away from home), and Islam, so to speak, is the foster son of both. Jesus was Jewish, his first disciples were Jews, and Christianity considered itself the "New Israel," the spiritual descendant of Abraham, and the inheritor of God's promises to "Old Israel" through Jesus the Messiah. So also Islam honors the Jewish patriarchs as holy men, Jesus as a prophet, the Bible as a word of God, and Jerusalem as a sacred place second only to Mecca and Medina. Thus in history and idea the three are intimately bound together.

This family relationship among the three faiths shows most distinctly in their common conviction that God is one being, of an essentially personal nature. This Semitic conception of God is what distinguishes these faiths from all other

<sup>7</sup> Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 38, quoted from *Udana*, viii, 3.

religions; they alone have achieved and maintained from the beginning a consistent personalistic monotheism. And though there are some differences of interpretation of this monotheism among the three (with which we shall deal shortly), despite such variation they are all truly and insistently monotheistic at bottom and hence may be treated as a unit.

Here we may make an interesting contrast between the Semitic and the Oriental ideas of personality. For the Hindu and Buddhist, personality would seem to be something of a pure, transparent essence. After one has precipitated all the contents of his personality (thoughts and emotions) to the bottom by the chemistry of self-discipline, the pure undefiled essence of the self remains—the self of the highest trance state, the self that is almost indistinguishable from emptiness or the Void. In such a state the sense of individuality is lost; the boundaries of “my” personality or consciousness shade off into vague feeling-states; that I am John Smith, or even I myself, is no longer a conscious realization. Thus, as previously noted, the personal and impersonal are not clearly distinguishable, and both terms may be applied to ultimate reality with no sense of contradiction.

But for the Semite the case is radically different. For him personality is opaque, or at the most, translucent rather than transparent; the person is an independent center of experience and activity; he desires, wills, thinks, feels as a unity. These are the *essence* of his personal being, not impurities to be refined out of his “true” personality. Personality includes all the concrete and specific manifestations of the individual person; for the Hebrew in particular it includes both bodily and mental activity. And though a later (Greek) doctrine of a purely nonmaterial soul somewhat affected both Jewish and Christian ideas of personality, on the whole this conception of a vital, opaque center of life and activity continues to be their basic quality. This, of course, is of particular importance when we come to say that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam conceive God as person; for by this they mean the concrete individuality of the Semitic concept of personality, not the transparent impersonal-personality of the Hindu.

Because most of the basic ideas that all three faiths hold concerning God originated with the Hebrew-Jewish faith, let us observe the Jewish conception of God more fully; for what is true of it will be true of them all—with some minor exceptions to be noted. And of that conception we may say that from its very first appearance among the Hebrews it has been definitely and fully personal. When we first encounter God on the pages of the Old Testament, He is a strong current of purposeful, one-directional activity in the course of historical events, a will working toward preconceived goals. He is a God Who is doing things—a God “who is about to do” His name Jehovah suggests; He is one Whose activities make a concrete difference in the world. Men are materially helped or blessed by His favor; they are materially hindered or hurt by His anger.



Sometimes it is difficult to know the reason for His observable actions, yet as a rule He makes His will and purpose clearly evident by specific commandment. The earliest form of Hebrew thought suggests that now and again He took on Himself actual bodily form so that He might speak to men or talk with them; but this crude anthropomorphism soon passed away. (Christianity and Islam, obviously, as inheritors of the later and more spiritualized development of Jewish thought, did not have to pass through this stage.) Most of the language of the Old Testament, in which God is spoken of as "seeing" the way the righteous man takes, "beholding" the sins of the wicked, "stretching forth his mighty arm" to punish, and the like, is a concession to the demands of vivid language. (Here again we observe the need of religion to speak in symbol and by figure, for how else could one suggest a personal, purposive will working in the world?) The essence of the matter is not the literal interpretation of such terms, but their intention to portray full-orbed, personal activity on the part of Jehovah. What remains at the center is the conception of God as a purposing, willing, and doing power.

Hebrew thought also attributed to God a very definite individuality. Jehovah was not just any god; He was not a name for what happens in nature—as in some areas of Greek and Hindu religion; He was not a nondescript being among a crowd of nondescript beings Whose praise could be sung with the same words, provided only that the names were changed, as in Egyptian religion; He was no vague oneness of being as in Oriental faiths. He was an individual with a distinctive name and character. "Who shall I say has sent me?" asks Moses, as he is about to go to Egypt. "How will my people know what to call You among all the many gods of Egypt, without your being confused with them?" The reply was: "My name is Jehovah" (Yahweh); here was a fully personal name—not simply an honorary title meaning god or deity in general.

And Jehovah had specific character traits. The descriptive term first applied to Him was "jealous"—apparently meaning that He demanded His followers' absolute obedience to Him under all circumstances, and would severely punish any lapses, small or great. There is the suggestion of irascibility and arbitrariness here too; sometimes God changed His disposition toward one without warning—perhaps a reflection of the Hebrew's uncertainty as to how to interpret a sudden reversal of fortune when he thought he had been God's loyal subject. Yet Jehovah was also unfailingly kind and approving toward those who obeyed His injunctions and served Him faithfully. On the whole He seemed very much like a rather austere desert sheikh.

In the course of the development of the Hebrew faith a modification of some of these characteristics took place. In the thinking of the prophets (8th to 6th

centuries B.C.) Jehovah had no capriciousness of temper; He was no longer of uncertain disposition, but the essence of moral dependability; His truth and faithfulness endure to all generations. *Men* might capriciously change toward Him, and He must naturally react correspondingly toward their different attitudes toward Him, in order to remain constant in His truth and faithfulness; yet His basic disposition toward them was always the same. He was a God of righteousness Who demanded justice and uprightness among His followers; what began as the intensity of His "jealousy" was transformed into the absoluteness of His ethical standards and his utter impartiality. Whatever men might do, God was ever the same, His truth eternal in the heavens; though He might adapt His methods to suit new circumstances, He held fast to His basic purposes.

This developing concept of God is extended in all directions. The Book of Proverbs portrays him as an eternal wisdom that once created and now sustains the world in its orderly operation. The Psalms and the later prophets declare that it is the steady purpose and character of God that establish the sun and stars in their courses, bring the seasons in regular succession, instil into the animals their secret wisdom for life, and permeate the whole of creation with beauty and grandeur. Never was God merely Nature personified; always He was the conscious will that controlled and worked through nature for His own ends; yet clearly He also loved His creation, and gave it its majestic rhythm and beauty.

From this core conception of God as righteous, dependable, of active will, observably at work in nature and human history, both Islam and Christianity have taken their basic doctrines of God and world reality. It might be said, indeed, that Islam's idea of God shows almost no change from the Hebrew conception—provided we take that conception in its early form. For though Islam conceives God (Allah) after the pattern of a faithful Creator and father of His people—as does later Judaism—there remains much of the autocratic desert sheikh about Allah. He is absolutely unaccountable to anyone or anything; what He says is good, is good because He declares it to be so, not because of any inherent or necessary quality of goodness apart from His will. If He chooses to be autocratic—according to human standards—or indulgent—as He often is—no man can gainsay him. What He has done is righteous because He, God, did it.

Now this is not quite what the Hebrew prophet Amos would have said. In general perhaps he would have agreed that righteousness is righteous primarily because God declares it so to be; yet one has the sense that Amos saw in righteousness a definable quality or standard that God must embody in order to be God. Amos does not say this, of course; but he implies it in declaring so pas-



sionately that God is just and will allow no exceptions to the rule of righteousness even among His chosen people; indeed, they are held to a higher standard precisely because they have had the benefit of His special attention. Now Allah, one instinctively feels, would be able to wink at a few derelictions from duty by *his* chosen, provided they honored him by the five daily prayers, alms, and a steady witness to the true faith among the infidels. One gains the impression that Mohammed drew his ideas of God from Genesis rather than from Amos, Isaiah, or Jeremiah.

On another count, however, Islam is more rigid perhaps even than Judaism—and certainly much more so than Christianity. It takes very seriously the statement that God is only one; it would not allow in its interpretation even the editorial “our” of Genesis, “Let us make man in our image.” Nor is Allah to be represented or hinted at in any way—by picture, statue, or symbolic representation—lest that representation become an idolatrous snare for the faithful. So it is that in Moslem mosque as well as Jewish synagogue there are no icons, pictures on the walls, statues, or anything suggesting that man is trying to portray the Divine Being in any physical way whatsoever.

The contrast with Christianity is obvious. Christianity speaks of God as Three-in-One, to the scandal of both Judaism and Islam. Especially to the latter it is near-polytheism; to the former it is a dangerous compromise of the unity of the Godhead. Obviously the difference hinges on the interpretation given Jesus. For the Christian he has always been the unique manifestation (incarnation) of God, appearing for a time in human form; he was therefore called God’s Son, which to the early Greek Christian meant of the same metaphysical substance as God, though Jewish tradition had conceived divine “sonship” to mean only moral likeness to God. And when he was about to leave the earth he promised, according to John’s Gospel, the Spirit of his continuing but invisible presence to his disciples in lieu of his physical presence with them. Thus the raw materials of Trinitarian doctrine, though not its full form, are to be found in the New Testament, and were shortly incorporated into the Christian doctrine of God: God the Father (Creator and Sustainer of the universe); God the Son (appearing once on earth in Jesus the Christ, but spiritually present always in God as mercy and love); God the Spirit (as the presently active influence and work of God in the hearts of men).

Nor has Christianity been utterly averse to physical representations of God. Technically and officially it has kept the second commandment to make no graven images of deity, or picture Him in any physical form; and it continually repeats the text which states that “God is a Spirit.” Yet there are qualifications all along the line. Its great artists have now and again used the walls of their shrines to portray God as an ancient, bearded, and reverend man-like being,

creating Adam or performing other deeds of power; and some modern plays like *Green Pastures* have gone so far as to represent the Lord (God) on the stage—something unthinkable to Jew or Moslem. And if we speak of Christ, considered by the orthodox to be the Son of God—that is, the incarnation of God in human form—Christianity has been more than lavish in its representations of him, both officially and unofficially. There are a multitude of statues and paintings of Christ of every sort and kind. We may go still further: Catholic Christianity has created so great a multitude of other symbolism of divine manifestation that they have become a major dimension in its faith and practice. It fills its sanctuaries with statues of Mary the mother of Jesus, and decrees that Christians may pray to her, as well as to a hundred or more other saints, to each of which it has assigned a day on the calendar. And in general, along with this Christian tendency physically to symbolize the divine, has gone a softening of the austerity of the Jewish and Islamic conceptions of God; He is more often referred to as loving father or spiritual companion than as king, judge, or determiner of destiny.

Yet, despite these variations, the main character of the conception of God in these three monotheisms is the same. For all his talk of a Trinity, the Christian fundamentally thinks of God as one, not many; the three "persons" of the Godhead (an unfortunate way of putting the matter) more nearly represent three phases of the character and activity of God the supreme person than three separate personal beings. Indeed, so far as the unity and personal nature of God are concerned, the operating relation of the Christian toward God will not be too greatly different from that of his Moslem or Jewish brother; that Being to whom he prays and with whom he seeks divine fellowship is unitary.

In conclusion: there are three or four features of this conception of the universe as governed by personal will that should be briefly re-emphasized, because of their importance for the ensuing comparison of the answers major religious faiths have made to the question we are dealing with here. The first item to note is that for the Hebrew, and the inheritors of his tradition, there is no tendency to pantheism or monism. As a definitely self-conscious personality God will not be diffused indiscriminately throughout the universe, equally in rock, star, blade of grass, elephant, and man, as pantheism suggests. Nor will He ever be considered to be a mere It-ness or nonpersonal substance, as in monism, which can be philosophically conceived but never worshiped or associated with; God is here a creator rather than a timeless essence, a sustainer and orderer of the universe rather than a quality pervading it. He will never be identified or confused with the works of His hands, but stands somewhat apart from them, always more than the world He has created.



It is to be noted, secondly, that the Semite does not share the reluctance of the mystic to specifically characterize the supreme being; there is ascribed to Him a definite moral and spiritual character. He may be conceived as saying, as Isaiah puts it, "My ways are not your ways," and complaining, through Jeremiah, that men do not know Him. But this is not because He is utterly incomprehensible, or utterly "other" than man; rather He is to be considered as possessing the best qualities man finds in himself—though in Him they are realized to an almost incomprehensible degree; He is human goodness raised to infinite perfection. For these other words are also found in the Judeo-Christian Bible: "Be ye holy, for I am holy," and "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Here is character that can be appreciated and imitated by man. So it is that the prophets called Jehovah righteous, for example, and apparently meant by it something of the same nature as human uprightness: dependability of purpose and character, faithfulness, truthfulness, personal integrity in general. So also the Christian calls God forgiving love; and at the beginning of nearly every sura of the Koran the Moslem refers to Allah as "the Compassionate, the Merciful."

A third feature: just as surely as God is personal and of a known moral character, so the basic relationship to be sought between God and men is of a personal and ethical sort; worshipers in this tradition speak of companionship or fellowship with God, not absorption into Him. They speak of their relation to Him in terms of service, love, and loyalty. They believe that He lays on them the obligations of this personal relationship, which must be expressed in deeds of truthfulness, justness, faithfulness, and mercy. He is a Ruler calling men to obedience; He is a Judge demanding of them uprightness; He is a Saviour and Father, redeeming His children from their distress and sin; He is the companion of man's pilgrimage and his spiritual home forever.

Inevitably from such a conception of the nature of reality flows an active involvement with it; for according to the Hebrew conception God is in the very midst of the affairs of this world; he has created the world, and He rules it, though allowing man some freedom within the created order. Moreover, God takes His world seriously and responsibly, for this world of physical deeds and human history is a real world, not an illusory dream; it is not an everlasting world in itself, to be sure, but deeds done within its framework are of everlasting significance. Therefore the man who believes the Hebrew teaching finds himself inevitably involved in the world along with God, seeking to understand His will and trying to make it effective in fellowship with Him. "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done," he prays, as he proceeds to work for the coming of that Kingdom.

### 6. *Interpretation*

We have before us in these religious accounts of the world structure two main versions: one conceives the world as an impersonal substance or essence; the other sees in it a personally directed system. The former is predominantly that of the Orient—China, India, Japan; the latter springs from mid-Eastern and Semitic origins. How then shall we choose between the two? What are the difficulties and issues raised by each?

Let us observe again that the Oriental view is more easily adapted to some features of the present scientific views of world structure than the Occidental. One writer states it thus:

A wonderful philosophy of dynamism was formulated by Buddha 2,500 years ago, a philosophy which is being re-created for us by the discoveries of modern science and the adventures of modern thought. The electro-magnetic theory of matter has brought about a revolution in the general concept of the nature of physical reality. It is no more static stuff but radiant energy. . . . Impressed by the transitoriness of objects . . . Buddha formulated a philosophy of change. He reduces substances, souls, monads, things to forces, movements, sequences and processes, and adopts a dynamic conception of reality.<sup>8</sup>

This is probably claiming too much for Buddha. For science did not achieve its insight into the nature of matter by following the Buddhist method of cutting itself off from sense experience and seeking to achieve an ecstatic trance in the laboratory; nor is the mystic quality of existence, which Buddha sensed in ecstasy, quite the same as mathematically calculated qualities of fields of force. And there would be other theories held by Buddha, such as that of reincarnation and the Law of Karma, which would not be any more acceptable to science than many another religious doctrine.

Actually, the chief advantage of Buddhism and Hinduism over the religious philosophy of the Judeo-Christian West is that they say scarcely anything about the ultimate nature of the world other than its being a unity in some sense. As we have seen, Buddha was agnostic about ultimates, and had no theory about the constitution of matter; and Hinduism's ultimate was the formless essence of Brahman. Such "theories," coupled with the elastic use of language in Oriental religions, means that their adjustment to the newer, dynamic accounts of "matter" are relatively easy. Whether they are of more than a very temporary religious advantage is another point.

On the other hand, the Semitic pattern of thought has some difficulties in this area—of the same general sort that we noted in connection with its theories of world and human origins. The Semitic way of thinking has time and again

<sup>8</sup> Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 367.



fastened itself to specific and definite world geographies. That which was rather incidentally assumed in the Bible was the ancient Sumerian; later, in the Christian and Jewish world of the early European medieval period, Ptolemaic geography and astronomy were officially countenanced—if not expounded—by the Church. When Copernican astronomy removed the earth from the center of the universe and relegated it to a back alley, the religious reverberations were considerable; for this also involved a dislocation, presumably, from the center of God's concern. Newtonian physics was never as closely tied up to religious views as the Ptolemaic, but it was nonetheless viewed with general friendliness in Christian circles because of its solid, systematic character, and because it offered at least the possibility of conceiving that it had been set in motion by a Creator. Einsteinian relativity has been received with mingled reactions in religious circles; some believe that it destroys certainty and introduces relativity at every level, while others see in it and the new physics a "spiritualization" of matter.

Particularly difficult is it for any personalized theory of reality to account for the uniformities of the mechanical order of nature. Many who habitually think of the physical world order as a system of uniform relationships, such as physics reports, find such a mechanical order incompatible with the thought of a personal directive agency. The idea of a personal agency seems to open the way to all manner of irregularities by way of intervention, personal whimsicality, the interruption of natural uniformity by miracle, and the like; how can one think of a world that shows itself to be very machine-like in every measurable way, other than in terms of *nonpersonal* uniformity?

We cannot discuss the full matter here, for many volumes have been written on it; but two or three things may be said in passing. One is that *conscious purpose is fully as dependable, if not as uniform, as is mechanical regularity*. Contrast a man with a machine. The machine can be depended on to do the task assigned it for numberless times—whether we consider the grinding of a bearing to a thousandth of an inch tolerance or the stapling of plastic cartons—and to do it with persistent regularity and with a uniformity much greater than a man can achieve. Yet the machine was called into being by man's purpose; it is enabled to carry forward because of the quality of that purpose; that is the essential, though not the sole reason for its utterly dependable mechanical uniformity. Therefore our basic reliance here is on the intelligence and purpose of the man, not on the machine's mechanical regularity; the machine is the instrument of the man. This is true even of the new electric "brains" or calculating machines.

A second consideration is that *the machine knows only one pattern of action, and carries this out to the bitter end*. True, a considerable degree of adaptability

can be built into machines, enabling them to adjust with unbelievable flexibility to changing conditions; nevertheless, this is all within the narrow range of one kind of calculation, that to which the machine has been suited. The mind, however, is able to change its plans completely and alter its mode of operation radically. A new plan may be tried out when an old one fails; one machine may be cast aside for another that will better serve the mind's purpose. But such flexibility does not mean undependability or lack of uniformity; indeed, it represents a superior ability to seek the same goal under differing circumstances—an ability the machine lacks.

And, third, it should be borne in mind that *a purpose is able to include a mechanism as a mechanism cannot include a purpose*. A purpose can use a mechanism without interrupting the mechanical uniformity of its operation. (It may even have helped construct that uniformity.) Thus a man's purposes work through the mechanisms of his body; and he uses other machines to achieve his goals, and they go about their operations in a perfectly mechanical, impersonal way. It is not inconceivable, therefore, to extend this personal purpose to the cosmic scale, and to retain not only the uninterrupted operation of its major mechanisms (natural forces), but to have confidence in a personal directive force presiding over the whole (the Divine Will), which uses those mechanisms for its own ultimate purposes:

We can say on the basis of our human experience that there seems to be no antecedent reason why a pervasive order of spiritual purpose should be utterly incompatible with the observed mechanics of the natural order. There would seem to be no *a priori* necessity why these [mechanics] should be considered the ultimate or exclusive elements of the universe or why purpose might not here, as well as on the human level, use the physical order for its own ends without an irresolvable conflict. . . . It seems fully within the bounds of possibility that here also conscious purpose may include and be creative of the mechanical sphere in a nonreversible relation.<sup>9</sup>

On other counts the issues are somewhat differently weighted. A theism of personal quality seems best suited for religious devotion and active personal commitment. It is almost impossible to conceive of the practice of prayer, for example, without considering God to be personal; words of prayer to an It-ness do not readily frame themselves; and the experience of companionship with One who is "nearer than hands or feet, closer than breathing," seems to fit best here. It is possible, of course, to conceive of an alternative that has been taken by many people: that is the pattern of devotion through meditation, practiced rather uniformly by the mystical and nontheistic religions. The Zen Buddhist seeks a knowledge of the self and a sense of emptiness by his religious

<sup>9</sup> Winston L. King, "The Ultimate Dependence," *Crozer Quarterly*, Vol. XXI, p. 124.



devotions, rather than an experience of companionship with God. The Hindu intellectual, who finds the ordinary theistic forms of devotion crude and unconvincing, will turn to meditative concentration on some theme calculated to bring him into wordless union with the impersonal Brahman. Or it may be the nominal theist, for whom prayer forms have lost their reality, who turns on occasion to his "long thoughts" as a substitute for prayer.

Yet, curiously, the matter does not seem to rest quietly here. It may be only a matter of language, or the weakness of human nature, but religious *impersonalism* seems continually to move over into religious *personalism*—both in individual practice and within religious organisms themselves. Radhakrishnan, as we have quoted him, admits that religious devotion—even of the mystical variety—cannot escape saying "He" when it approaches God devotionally, *i.e.*, religiously. H. N. Wieman is a contemporary writer in the general Christian tradition who calls himself a "naturalistic theist," but has warred valiantly against the practice of speaking of God as a person (he prefers to say that God is "the total complex situation"); yet he says that man is saved by creative good (God) only when "he apprehends it by faith and gives himself to its supreme control."<sup>10</sup> This is a personalized relation in fact if not in name; the "it" acts unconscionably like a "he." And it is also true that the pantheistic and mystical religions like Buddhism and Hinduism have tended to move from sheer impersonalism to personalistic conceptions: Buddha became a god to whom most men prayed in later Buddhism; and Hinduism developed its great bhakti cults to compensate for the cold impersonality of Brahmanism. Religion would then appear to be inherently personalistic; for when it is coldly impersonal it rapidly becomes something less or other than religious.

There is also something to be said in favor of theism over impersonalism on the score of personal and moral values. Theism expresses itself more easily in fully personal relationships and ethical living than does pantheistic and mystic impersonalism. Because it finds God dispersed everywhere, pantheism distributes its love so generously throughout the universe that it cannot well accord man any unique status, or give him a peculiarly personal love. It may love everyone in general but no one in particular—such is the flavor of the Buddhist practice of "infinite compassion." Mystical religion (also pantheism many times) tends to withdraw from the actual world and all its affairs because the world of time and space is ensnaring, unreal, or unimportant; its vital concern for that world and those who live in it has been sucked dry by its self-centered hope of achieving a world-denying ecstasy far from the loves or hates of men within the depths of the most private self; or else that concern is spread so thinly or so negatively that it cannot muster sufficient enthusiasm to seek to alter

<sup>10</sup> *The Source of Human Good*, University of Chicago Press, 1946, p. 287.

the world about it. It is not interested in establishing close personal relationships with men, because such relationships are entangling alliances that may divert the saint from achieving salvation. And if one like the Buddha inspired warm personal attachment on the part of his fellow monks, as he did, it was in spite of his religious views rather than because of them.

Theistic religion, on the other hand, majors in personal relationships. Whereas with Buddhism a fellowship of believers came only slowly—even grudgingly—with Judaism and Christianity human fellowship has always been essential to the religious life. The family and communal expressions of faith are, as we have seen, of the essence of Judaism; and Christianity has followed suit in calling its believers a family or household of faith, and by expending tremendous energy in the organization of church groups. Individual souls or persons are looked on as of incalculable value, because God also is a person; personality and personal values are not mere transient shadow shapes, as Buddhism or Hinduism would hold (or incidental by-products of natural processes, as some types of modern naturalism would imply), but of the self-same stuff as ultimate reality itself. We may meaningfully speak in the Judeo-Christian context of *the fellowship of love for one another*—which is a very different thing from a fellowship of pity, in which one sympathizes with his fellow victim who is also bound to the Wheel of Life, but whose personal existence is actually a thing of small worth or moment to him. It also means considerably more by way of active concern for a fellow man's welfare than does tolerant but nonactive benevolence toward all creatures.

Obviously, as we have suggested, such an enhancement of personal relationships as is found in a personal theism leads to active moral and social endeavor. Since God is righteous in an understandable sense, and since one's relation to Him is best conceived in the personal terms of fellowship and love, the believer expresses his loyalty to God in ethical behavior toward other men. For that matter, one's relations to *God* can be fully ethical only in a personal theism; for one cannot be ethical in his behavior toward a nonpersonal being or toward a force. Ethics has to do with interpersonal relations; but impersonal conceptions of the Supreme Reality dampen this kind of activity. If it is a coldly materialistic conception of the universe of which we are speaking (no religious overtones), then it simply means that persons do not rate for much beyond the uses they may have for our convenience. If it is a mystical approach to a passionless, impersonal One of which we speak, then the ultimate goal is ecstatic feeling—not ethical goodness or personal communion. As noted, the mystic puts moral categories behind and below him as he rises to the heights of self-realization; he does not seek to "fulfill the law"—fill it fuller of meaning by an inner



spiritual obedience to it, as did Jesus—but to rise superior to all law or moral regulation.

It would be invidious at this point to make an over-all generalization about the worth of those religions that are theistic personalisms, like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, over against those that tend to be impersonalistic, like Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shintoism. One reared in one of the Western faiths has no right to declare that those from the East have achieved no valid spiritual insights, or to compare the best of his ideals with the worst of their practices; yet one or two general statements may be made without prejudice. One is that the East on the whole—largely under the influence of its religions—has been indifferent to human physical welfare; whereas the West, under the influence of the Judeo-Christian tradition, has made it a major concern. Religion in the East has been a socially static force that fares poorly under the pressures of modern industrialism and aggressive Communism, which focus intensive concern on man's material welfare. And Christian missions have been influential, far above their actual number of converts, because their active social concern has produced a potent social unrest within the Orient.

The other statement is that even at this point the West has perhaps something to learn from the East. No doubt the active concern for human welfare—welfare in this present form of flesh-and-blood existence in a world of time and space—is all to the good. Indeed, the East must make far better terms with physical needs in the future than it has in the past; and if its religions cannot bring to it such concern and activity as a positive spiritual contribution, then it will find this concern for flesh-and-blood humanity *forced* on it by the dual impact of Communism and technical industrialism. India in particular will be pushed along this path by the forces of her own newly realized nationhood. But this same concern of the West for physical welfare is often part of an aggressive intolerance of others' values, which may destroy human worth just as surely by overriding variant patterns of culture and thought, in the name of progress and superior righteousness, as Eastern religions have undermined that worth by unconcern and neglect of the physical. The hope to be cherished is that Eastern impersonalism and social passivity may be filled with the warmth of Western personal concern, and that aggressive Western theism and moralism be made more flexible and tolerant, without losing their social concern and moral earnestness.

## Chapter XXVII

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### WHAT IS MAN AND WHITHER IS HE BOUND? HE IS A LIVING SOUL SUBJECT TO SALVATION

#### 1. *The Religious Context of the Question*

Very probably the writer of the 8th Psalm was the first man to frame the question specifically when he inquired: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" Probably a certain amount of curiosity about himself is inherent in man as man; but it is not till relatively well along in his cultural history that he comes to ask himself this explicit question. Because he begins his life as member of a close-knit social group in which his consciousness of himself as a separate individuality is at a minimum, man comes to the stage of outright self-analysis only after a considerable cultural advance. It is of course his association with his fellows in group life that enables him to achieve this analytical self-consciousness; but he achieves it only when he can somewhat separate himself from them and stand a little apart.

Religion shares both the fundamental human interest in the question about the nature of man and also man's tardiness in asking it; for it is first of all interested in the great natural environing forces, and only later—by a kind of reflex action—in man himself. This is because religion is a technique of getting along with the universe; consequently it centers its primary attention on that universe, rather than self-consciously on man—somewhat as a marksman temporarily forgets himself in his concentration on that part of the world he can see through his peep sight; or as the individual temporarily loses his sharp sense of self-consciousness when he is surrounded by the vastness of the ocean, and is filled with a vivid awareness of it. The first questions historic religions have asked are these: "What kind of a world do we live in? and how did it begin?" And only then do they have time or inclination to ask further: "What sort of creature is man?" Obviously the questions are not unrelated. As we have seen in our study of religious theories of world origin, the question of *human* origins and status in the created order of things cannot be avoided—once we have begun to inquire about the origins of the universe. Yet at this point of religious



development human status is still only incidental to cosmic nature; even the Psalmist asks his question in the form, "What is man in *God's* eyes?"

Despite religion's tardiness in asking this leading question of man, it is probably in the religious context that it is first asked, whatever the culture under consideration. For it is in religious practice and thought that man comes to realize his partial isolation from the rest of creation, even though at the same time and by means of the same religious devices he is strenuously seeking to identify himself with his environment. For religion sets him "over against" the world about him by the special demands it makes on him. He is required to perform certain rituals, observe rigid taboos, and practice some ascetic measures in its name, since it declares that the powers or forces it represents require such conduct of man. Somehow man cannot go along unconsciously and instinctively, as do the animals; he must make special and unusual efforts to adjust himself to the world of which he is a physical member, because that world is somehow different for him than for them. Therefore, even though at first his religion takes a group rather than an individual form, by means of it he begins to sense his peculiarity as man; and later, through the avenue of this religious stimulation, he comes to inquire: "What am I that the universe should require this of me?"

The religious approach to the question of man's nature—cosmos to man, not man to cosmos—is significant for its total treatment of man. It never considers man as an entity in himself until some of its very late and perhaps over-philosophized forms. Even the much-talked-about "reverence for individual personality" of these latter days is a by-product of interest in God—not primarily of a direct concern for man; that is, man as "child of God"—man as carrying in himself some measure of divine potentiality—is of special worth; such, at least, is the historic origin of this reverence. Hence religion does not usually approach man on a purely empirical basis, as biology and psychology might, and inquire: "What is man as he stands there 'on the hoof'?" but, "What is man in his connection with the total universe? What is the quality of man in the widest and most ultimate context we can find for him—one even greater than his life as animal, or member of a human society?"

So it is that we link our two queries: "What is man, and what is his destiny?" For when we speak of human destiny we must speak in terms of human relationships to the cosmos in which that destiny will be achieved. The question of destiny is the question of what the cosmos will allow man as his future lot. But it is also the question of what sort of creature man is. For again, destiny for humanity is the nature of reality plus the nature of humanity—the result of the interaction of the two. Indeed, religion is probably the foremost of all disciplines of thought—science and philosophy included—in affirming man's one-

ness with the universe. The difference between them is the level at which each conceives that unity to occur; religion's peculiarity is that it insists on uniting ultimate man with ultimate reality, and nothing less.

We may begin by calling attention to a fact we observed when dealing with the creation stories: religions uniformly conceive man to be at the top of the created order, enjoying a special relation to the creative powers or forces. But they go on to say another thing: *man is a dual being*; and his duality is one that may reflect or partake of the duality religions find in the cosmos itself, but which may also achieve its own peculiarly human dimension.

There are in general two ways in which religions describe the duality they find in man. One of these is the prevalent body-soul division. This is partly the result of the empirical observation of the obvious duality of man's being—his physical and apparently more-than-physical characteristics. (This is still an acute philosophical problem of the first order.) And it is also partly the result of the religious conception of the universe, as being dual in quality. Now the term *soul* is religion's peculiar designation for the more-than-physical part of man, and is usually intended to include intelligence, will force, moral character, and the generally spiritual or immaterial part of man; it or its equivalent term is used almost universally in the world's sacred literatures. Egyptian religion, for example, considered that man was composed of body and *Ka* or *Ba* (vital-mental principle). The Greeks made particularly definite the division between body and soul; they regarded the body as the polluted prison of the pure spiritual soul, from which the latter would be liberated at death, or could be progressively freed by austerities that reduced the bodily role to a near zero. Christianity has been considerably influenced by this viewpoint—despite its somewhat different Jewish heritage; and mysticism in general tends to draw the same line pretty distinctly by seeking its climactic visions "beyond" or "above" the bodily sense-life.

The other form of the dualism religions stress is that found between the "higher" and "lower" selves. Often this is closely related to the above distinction: the higher self is the spiritual or mental self, the lower is the animal or bodily self. The higher self of an individual is the seat of his spiritual and moral desires and powers, the lower the source of his degrading and ensnaring physical appetites; thus the mental-physical duality takes on the ethical characteristics of goodness and badness. Sometimes—as with Buddhism and Hinduism—there is the Highest Self within the higher self, which is held to be more than—or different from—even this mental-moral higher self; yet, practically speaking, this is only a technical refinement of the more prevalent form of the higher spiritual and lower physical self-division.

A further statement is rather generally made about man: in addition to put-



ting him at the top of the created order and pointing out his dual nature, religions consider him to be congenitally *in need of salvation*. He is out of harmony with his universe—at least major parts of it—and he needs for his own best interests to be put in harmony with it. Indeed, the duality of the cosmos, the duality of man, and his disharmony with his universe, are all closely related; for man often finds the different and conflicting parts of himself in alliance with or opposition to the different and conflicting forces in the world; his salvation consists in eliminating these disharmonies.

But just as the duality found by religions both in the universe and in man is expressed somewhat differently in each one, so there are differing conceptions of this division of man against his world and his sometimes dividedness against himself. We note again the general East-West division. Western religions—and in particular the Semitic group—conceive of man as a sinner. This means that man was born with a bent toward rebellion against God (*original sin*); or that he has committed many sinful deeds in opposition to God's will (*sins*); or both. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all adopt this general view of man, with some individual variations. Eastern religions, on the other hand, rather generally suggest that actual sinfulness is only a part of the reason for man's need of salvation. It is true that he has built up a bad Karma force by evil deeds done in former lives; yet his primary trouble is that he is ignorant and deceived about the true nature of life. Once let him fully comprehend the evanescent and worthless character of this present world, and he will be able to free himself from its bondage—that is, attain salvation. Thus, while the West seeks to achieve moral transformation of the bad will and the forgiveness of sins, the East seeks a mystical enlightenment of the spirit that will free man from the love of this passing world of Maya, or illusion.

In connection with this it might be pointed out that man's need of salvation, as all religions see it, is both metaphysical and psychological. It is metaphysical because man is out of harmony with the major forces of the universe, or unaware of the true nature of the ultimate reality of that universe; he must therefore adjust the major direction of his living to obedience and awareness, or he will suffer permanent, perhaps eternal, harm. But it is also psychological; for religions insist that man is unhappy, frustrated, divided within himself, because he has not achieved harmony with his universe. Most of them hold that the saved man will even in this life gain a peace, contentment, and serenity that his unsaved brother cannot know; because salvation is another name for oneness with himself and with the universe.

Religions make a final statement about man: *man can be saved*. This is religion's answer to the question as to the nature and destiny of man. If man is a divided being in a divided world, the better part of him is yet capable of tri-

umphing by virtue of the aid of the better part of the universe. Salvation is his true destiny. There is thus a double guarantee of man's salvation—or at least a double reason for thinking that he is a soul capable of salvation: the nature of his own soul and the nature of the universe. For though man may have somehow made a sorry mess of things and be in need of salvation, he is also in some sense of divine origin and hence divine in nature. He is *atman*, of the same substance as *Brahman*, says Hinduism; he has powers within him that can achieve *Nirvana*, says the Buddhist; he is a child of God, made in the spiritual image of God, say Judaism and Christianity—marred by sin but capable of restoration. Man's own better part and higher nature—indeed the very fact that he is conscious that he has sinned and come short of the glory of God, not achieved his true destiny as a full son of God—these are evidence of his real spiritual capability for salvation.

And, besides, he lives in a universe that has the power and the will to save him. Religions uniformly hold that there is available to every man, if he will take advantage of it, sufficient resource for salvation. Hinduism may for a time defer hope for the lower castes, and Buddhism suggest in its later years that in these degenerate days the *Nirvanic* experience is very rare; but theoretically they hold reality to be such that salvation is finally possible for every man. Christianity in particular has stressed the fact that not only is the universe capable of man's salvation, but that there is in it a God Who is love, searching for man in the hope of saving him.

Now man's capacity to be saved suggests that he has a certain freedom of will, and a partial ability to decide his own destiny; and such, indeed, is the implicit teaching of nearly all religions. Some have seemed to deny it: Hinduism and Buddhism in their iron Law of Karma, by which a man cannot escape even a fractional part of the penalty of his deeds; Islam by its teaching of the absolute power of Allah over every man's life; some forms of Christianity by their teaching of the predestination of some men to glory and others to damnation. Yet there are loopholes. There is good Karma as well as bad; and it is possible for any man, of whatever caste, to increase his good Karma. Indeed, Karma is as much friend as foe; because if a man wills to achieve salvation nothing can withstand him, and he may build up such a height of good Karma that ultimately it will place him within reach of *Nirvana* or *Brahman*. And both Moslem and Christian predestinarians, notwithstanding the absoluteness of God's rule, spend an amazing amount of energy and time in seeking to conform their lives to that rule. Practically speaking, whatever their theory, religions universally hold that man's co-operation is needed for salvation, that his intensive search for it is both possible and necessary. Man may or may not choose to be



saved; but in any case he cannot be saved without that choice—which, at least in part, is his own responsibility.

## 2. *The Major Religious Philosophies of Man*

Three examples of religious philosophies of the nature and destiny of man have been chosen: the Confucian, the Hindu-Buddhist, and the Judeo-Christian. These have been selected, not on the basis of exhausting all the actual religious interpretations of man, but because they illustrate the major types of such philosophies, and because they offer examples of current religious and semireligious treatments of the same subject. Those religions we have omitted to deal with either have no noteworthy philosophy of humanity—because they are primarily group religions, such as primitivism, Shintoism, and the nationalist religions in general—or else their viewpoints may be rather easily inferred from those we do treat, which is true of the Zoroastrian and Islamic doctrines in relation to the Judeo-Christian viewpoint. The Confucian viewpoint might be called *naturalistic and humanistic*—though with some vague religious overtones; the Hindu-Buddhist viewpoint is primarily that of a *psychological-mystical* unification of the human being from within his own spiritual resources; and the Judeo-Christian is an *activist, moralistic* viewpoint, which insists on attaching man's efforts to some kind of discernible cosmic purpose and will.

### a. *Confucian Humanism*

*Man is essentially good. By learning to harmonize his will to Heaven's decrees and discovering his own natural capacities, he may become a Superior Man and help create a well-ordered society.*

Because Confucianism stands on the border line between a social ethic and a religion—being perhaps more of the former than the latter—its ideas of man furnish an extremely interesting case for study. For its spirit and general attitude on such matters are those of a multitude of people in many different cultures who have thus also stood on the edge of religion, not fully attached to its supernaturalist ideas nor yet fully divorced from its moral ideals. One might think of the Greek philosophers and writers who dubiously surveyed the popular religious polytheism of their day and found its stories unconvincing and its morals unpalatable; some of them spoke quite eloquently of the good, or God, but did not found religions or become religious devotees. There were also the humanists of late medieval Europe, who rather nominally acceded to the dominant Christian tradition but gave their intellectual and spiritual devotion to the study of Greek and Roman classical culture and contemporary human interests. Or one might mention those who called themselves Deists, such as Lord Herbert, Blount, Matthew Tindal, Diderot, Jefferson, Paine, Franklin,

*et al.*, in 17th-century and 18th-century Europe and America, who acknowledged the existence of a Power who had obviously created nature, but who denied the truth of all specifically revealed religious doctrines.

It is also closely akin in spirit—though perhaps different in terminology—to the beliefs of many of our contemporaries. For there are large numbers of people in the Western Christian tradition for whom that tradition is no longer a vital religious faith, but primarily a code of morality with perhaps nostalgic religious overtones. From the ranks of these comes that group who call themselves *humanists*, rejecting all belief in supernaturalism of any sort—as their name indicates, but who wish to take science as their guide and loyalty to human welfare as their “religion.” Julian Huxley, eminent British scientist, has recently stated his conception of such a humanist religion in these words:

There are large numbers of people all over the world who are dissatisfied with supernaturalism or with purely political creeds and are potential humanists in believing that we must rely on developing the resources of human nature. The next phase of history could be, and in my view, should be, a humanist phase. . . . If men believe that the right development of natural and human resources is the nearest we can find to absolute destiny for our species collectively and individually, this will spell a fundamental change in the social and political outlook.<sup>1</sup>

He is further quoted as advocating the construction of a theology that would “be simple enough to appeal to the generality of men, but at the same time deep and rich enough to satisfy the most complex mind,” and the creation of an organization of world scope to organize and propagate such a faith.

We might compare with this a modern writer’s interpretation of Confucianism as

a cult, the aim of which it was to demonstrate, not how to get to heaven, but how to behave on earth, not how to become God, but how to be a gentleman.<sup>2</sup>

Like most epigrams, this probably oversimplifies the case, though containing considerable truth. Confucius was humanistic in his main interest—that is certain; he scarcely ever mentioned, let alone dealt with, those ultimate questions concerning human origin and destiny, or the nature of the universe, that occupy so many pages in most religious literature; on these subjects he was noncommittal—perhaps even agnostic. The nearest he comes to being religious is in the vague, rather general Chinese sense of believing that one’s actions must accord with the decrees of Heaven. Thus he records his own spiritual progress:

At fifteen I had my mind bent on learning. At thirty I stood firm; at forty I had

<sup>1</sup> *Des Moines Register*, Des Moines, Iowa, August 22, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Maurice Collis, *The First Holy One*, Knopf, 1948, p. 235.



no doubts. At fifty I knew the decrees of Heaven. At sixty my ear was an obedient organ for the reception of truth. At seventy I could do what my heart desired without transgressing what was right.<sup>3</sup>

This is assuredly religious faith and devotion of a remarkably moderate degree of enthusiasm. The decrees of Heaven, of which Confucius so reverently speaks, are scarcely a religious revelation in the Christian or Moslem sense, or anything like the illuminations of an ecstatic trance in the Indian tradition. They tend to boil down to the standards of the ancient Chinese way of life that Confucius found in the ancient classics. Idealized and somewhat rationalized, these classics and their pattern were for him the essence of that wisdom in which the Superior Man must steep himself. Confucian "faith" was, then, of the quality of Deism: its devotion was to a far-off God (Heaven); its well-bred zeal for worship could satisfy itself in the infrequent formalities of public state ritual, and its moral fervor in the observance of the social code of a cultured gentleman. Though Confucius theoretically shared the Taoist concern for achieving accord with the Heavenly Way, that Way was in his thought implicit rather than explicit, implied rather than relied upon. The Heavenly Way was of little use to Confucius until it was concretely bodied forth in social custom and law. It was to be understood and practiced by the use of one's intelligence, and the development of his innate human capacities. Thus, for all practical purposes, Confucius may be legitimately called a humanist—though he had no strong theistic tradition to react against as does the modern humanist, who by the acceptance of this name expresses disbelief in any superhuman God. At least anyone holding Confucius' positive views and sharing his agnosticism would be called a humanist today.

Actually his basic interest was not in religion but in the concrete ethical and social problems of man. He did not hold up for imitation the ideal of a saintly life, whose heroic virtue could be achieved only by an intense devotion plus the gift of God's grace, but the ideal of the rational maturity of the Superior Man. This ideal man might be thus characterized: he has integrity and inner assurance. He is natural and unaffected within the limits of the conventional social proprieties. (Confucius had no idea of an unsophisticated "return to nature," like Rousseau.) He is reserved, dignified, cultured. He is possessed of an acute practical intelligence which is not easily duped, yet he is maturely benevolent. He is a self-controlled man of poise, who in all situations maintains his equilibrium. He achieves an inner serenity and an outward equanimity, compounded of the knowledge he has of his own principles and convictions, a sound estimate and conviction of his own personal worth, and a general assur-

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by John B. Noss, *Man's Religions*, p. 364.

ance that his ways are in accord with the patterns laid down by Heaven. Three brief quotations from Confucian literature well characterize the ideal developed in these writings:

There are three things of which the superior man stands in awe. He stands in awe of the ordinances of heaven. He stands in awe of great men. He stands in awe of the words of sages.<sup>4</sup>

It is only the individual possessed of the most entire sincerity that can exist under heaven, who can adjust the great invariable relations of mankind, establish the great fundamental virtues of humanity, and know the transforming and nurturing operations of heaven and earth;—shall this individual have any being or anything beyond himself on which he depends?<sup>5</sup>

Sincerity is the way of heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the way of men. He who possesses sincerity is he who, without an effort, hits what is right, and apprehends without the exercise of thought;—he is the sage who naturally and easily embodies the right way. He who attains to sincerity is he who chooses what is good and firmly holds it fast. To this attainment there are requisite the extensive study of what is good, accurate inquiry, careful reflection on it, the clear discrimination of it, and the earnest practice of it.<sup>6</sup>

There is perhaps no better statement of the spirit of earnest rational inquiry and of the reasoned pursuit of practical moral good to be found anywhere in the world's literature.

For Confucius the attainment of individual moral character and mature emotional balance is the key to everything else. He has great confidence in the power of the intrinsic moral and personal worth of the individual to produce the good society—especially if the rulers and prominent men are men of good solid character; then their superior goodness will shine forth like light, and inevitably create rightness in all those social relationships in which they are involved. Thus does he describe what happened when the good rulers of ancient times matured into truly superior men:

Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts became sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy. From the Son of Heaven [the emperor] down to the mass of people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Robert Ballou, *The Bible of the World*, p. 414.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 427 f.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 425 f.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 420.



This cultivation of the person, however, must not be considered a hot-house production of purely individual virtue, or an inner cherishing of mystic perfection; it is a virtue which can and must express itself practically in the social world. Even though virtue begins with the individual, its most characteristic expression is in society; perhaps virtue does not truly exist apart from this expression. The Superior Man is superior only in so far as his inner virtue can express itself in concrete relationships with his fellows. And the key word of the good social life is *reciprocity*. Reciprocity means the full acceptance and proper performance of the duties and obligations that come to one because of his place in the basic human social pattern. Each person yields to his fellow man what is proper to his respective social relation or station. Specifically, the good social life consists in measuring up to the following standards:

Kindness in the father, filial piety in the son;  
Gentility in the eldest brother, humility and respect in the younger;  
Righteous behaviour in the husband, obedience in the wife;  
Humane consideration in elders, deference in juniors;  
Benevolence in rulers, loyalty in ministers and subjects.

Apart from these five reciprocal relationships Confucius could think of no others of importance; these included the whole of life.

There was one further aspect of Confucian humanist philosophy, which would not fit into modern humanism, but which, for the Confucianist, was a logical extension of one of his principles, namely, *ancestor worship* as expressive of filial piety in the son. For when an elder member of the family died he was to be honored still as ancestral spirit, in much the same way one honors his parents or grandparents while they are yet alive. This, indeed, was much more of a universally practiced religious ritual than any other in Confucianism—reaching down into even the humblest homes. The rites themselves were no doubt of near-primitive origin, yet they fitted into the general pattern of the this-worldly, practical viewpoint of the Chinese. One honored his ancestors with tablets and periodic offerings, both as befitted their august and honorable status, and also in order to keep them, as disembodied spirits, from harming the living community. After a few generations any given ancestor faded out of the worship ceremonial, and was replaced by the more recently deceased. Nor is there in Confucian literature any depiction of the state of the ancestral spirit as one of glory and splendor to which men might gladly aspire; there is indeed little or no suggestion as to the nature of that state, either good or bad.

The main outlines of Confucian humanism should now be clear. It is in general an optimistic one; man is not a fearful sinner by nature—indeed, the word “sin” in the religious sense scarcely enters into Confucian thinking. Men—particularly those in high places in society—by living contrary to the decrees of

Heaven may bring the punishment of Heaven down on the whole people in the form of war, famine, or flood. But there is no great sense of personal guilt before this largely impersonal Heaven; nor, consequently, are there many introspective searchings of the heart to be observed here; the Confucian concern is more with the development of one's own practical and cultural capacities and their use in his society, than with inner states or feelings. That the human being is a Yang-Yin mixture occasions no strenuous inner or ascetic discipline to lessen the Yin and increase the Yang element. Man is viewed as almost entirely a citizen of this world—one who may hope to do his best in it by a knowledge of the ancient community culture and wisdom, by the development of the natural capacities of each person according to his rank in society, and by the exercise of his rational faculties to their maximum. He may assume that the will of Heaven will be thus carried out, if he supplements the wisdom of the ancestral culture with his own best efforts, and leavens the whole with a genuine sincerity.

And what is the desired destiny of man? Apparently not some blessed life-after-death heaven; little or no time has been spent by Confucians on speculations about such possible but unknowable eventualities; it is simply assumed that one will in due time take his place among the honored ancestral spirits. Who knows their status, however? Perchance there is a suspicion—as in Taoism—that they return to be united impersonally with the great creative life forces of the universe in the end. But there is seldom more than this meagre hope.

The center of interest is actually in man's fulfillment of his proper functions in society: a well-ordered, maturely balanced man in a well-ordered society—this is the Confucian equivalent of the Christian Kingdom of God. Living as he did in a time of social unrest, Confucius looked backward rather than forward to find the pattern of his ideal society; for the feudal order of the past, in which society was carefully graded from top to bottom, with each man fulfilling the reciprocal obligations suitable to his rank, seemed to him to make the most sense. Perhaps both his strong feeling for ordered symmetry, and his conviction that social perfection belonged to China's past—when the feudal pattern was dominant—combined to make him consider feudalism as the true social ideal. When men of virtue should fill every public post, and when all the people, inspired by the examples of their rulers, should seek to fulfill the law of reciprocity in all their relations, from the lowliest peasant family on up to the emperor of the realm, then would the tranquil, well-ordered society be established on earth. Thus Confucians; and who can hope for more than this, or better, out of life?



b. *Buddhist and Hindu Realization of the Mystical Self*

*Buddhism: Man is a transient compound of elements, physical and mental, whose highest destiny is to attain passionless detachment from his world by means of physical, moral, and spiritual disciplines, and thus escape rebirth back into life.*

*Hinduism: Man is essentially eternal soul-substance (atman) somehow caught in the meshes of an illusory material world of individual existence (Maya), whose true destiny is to achieve unity with the World-Self (Brahman) by disciplined insight or intense emotion.*

Despite the fact that Buddhism was initially a revolt against Brahmanism (the earlier form of Hinduism), flatly denying its conception of a soul and the efficacy of its sacraments, the two are functionally so much alike that in their doctrine of man we may treat them together. And in both cases we shall deal with the main features of their classical statements of principle, rather than with all their subsequent modifications. Obviously they are both at a far remove from Confucianism. To use William James' phraseology, they distinctly teach the "sick-soul," other-worldly, conception of man rather than the Confucian "healthy-soul," this-worldly, kind. While the latter holds up harmonious living in this life as the *summum bonum* for man, the former two turn away from this world in all its works and ways, and call for a radical alienation of body, mind, and heart from earthly life (especially is this true of Buddhism). Whereas Confucianism is practical and rational, Buddhism and Hinduism are inherently mystical; whereas Confucianism looks for man's chief good in the world and society, they expect to find it within the human self.

We may begin with the superficial opposition of the two doctrines of the self held by Hinduism and Buddhism. From the time of the Upanishads on (1000 to 800 B.C.) Hinduism has had a very definite doctrine of man. Essentially he is a soul—or at least composed of a soul substance—which was called *atman*, a word derived from "breath." (This is no doubt a trace of the primitive conception of the soul as especially connected with the process of breathing, *i.e.*, the "breath of life," whose cessation or disappearance at death indicated the soul's flight. We shall encounter it also in Hebrew conceptions of the soul.) This soul, or self, is the knower, the thinker, the feeler, behind and beyond the physical and mental acts that characterize the observable man; this is the human subject or personality that calls itself "I," and is more than its states of mind or their contents. It is the I-ness of all my acts, the doer of all my deeds, and thinker of all my thoughts.

Let us emphasize again the particular nature attributed to the self by Hinduism, in order that we may distinguish it from our Western conceptions, and see



how it essentially agrees with the Buddhist no-soul doctrine. As we before observed, the Hindu self is a transparent sort of thing; indeed, it is questionable whether we should call it a "thing," in the sense of being an individual substance around which we can draw a circle. Or perhaps it is *just* that: a temporary circle drawn about a bit of the World-Soul substance by its incarnation in a body. It is not truly a separate identity of interest or worth in itself, but a mysteriously separated bit of soul stuff yearning to rejoin its Source. Its fullest life is not realized in the development of capacities that fit it for life in this world—the enhancement of physical, mental, and emotional powers; it is not most real as a separate center of thinking, knowing, or feeling that jealously cherishes its inner privacy. It is at its fullest degree of reality when it is lost in union with the World-Soul (as in trance), when the little circle of space-time individuality that temporarily encloses it in "me" is erased.

Now according to Buddhism, as before noted, there is no soul in man—or man is not-soul; he is a temporary association of elements (*skandhas*), held together for the term of his earthly life in a kind of pseudo-individuality. Brahmanism, said Buddhism, had erred in making the most unstable of all these elements, consciousness, into a substantial self or soul. And to over-value this unreal self is a more dangerous error than to over-value the body, for it leads to an even more subtle and complete spiritual bondage. One who is attached to his selfness is more firmly bound to the Wheel of Life and to rebirth than the grossly indulgent man of strong fleshly appetites—somewhat as the self-righteous Pharisee was further from the Kingdom, according to Jesus, than the harlots and tax-collectors.

The self, indeed, is nothing other than the bodily and conscious states that are experienced in me; there is really no self or I which sees in my seeing, or hears in my hearing; these acts—and others of the same sort—are only the result of the stimulus of the outer world on the compound of elements that form "me" for the few years of my earthly life—they indicate no real unity with a metaphysical status. These elements hang together in my pseudo-individuality for a short time, under the name and form of John Smith, and then are dissolved by death. They do not return to Brahman, for there is nothing to return; man is no-soul or nonsoul.

So much may be said for the contradiction between the two theories of man held by Hinduism and Buddhism—a contradiction that on the surface seems absolute. Yet obviously they are not as far apart as they seem, because the meaning given to the "true" self by Hinduism is so indistinct and so utterly different from the active personal self as we know it, in our own and others' ordinary experiences, that it could almost agree with Buddhism in the things it says about the self. Indeed, Hindu soul and Buddhist no-soul act suspiciously



alike. Soul is not the body, nor sensation, nor feeling states, nor separate individuality; it rises to its truest reality when it is shut off from all consciousness of the outer world, and no longer experiences vivid sensation or strong emotion; it is most real when it loses its sense of selfness. The Hindu and Buddhist trance experiences, which define for both the nature of the self, are scarcely distinguishable in quality; unless it be that the former is somewhat more emotionally intense in its awareness of union with the Ultimate than is the Buddhist cool and calm Nirvanic peace. And actually, what difference is there between utter absorption of the individual into Brahman, and his "going out" in Nirvana? In either case his ensuing state is not one of self-consciousness as we know it here, or of personal individuality as we now experience it; it is only that Hinduism tends to emphasize the positive features of this destiny, and Buddhism its negative.

The basic likeness of their concepts of the self—despite the formal difference in statement—is further evidenced by the way in which both religions deal with it practically. Take the essential matter of how the individual is supposed to achieve salvation from his present unsatisfactory state. Basically Hinduism and Buddhism frame the problem and its solution in the same way; both accept the doctrine of the transmigration of soul or self from one earthly existence to another, according to the law of deed or Karma. For Hindu theory this is of course no problem. The atman, though only temporarily separated from its Source, is still separated; the present bodily existence is the evidence of that. And it will go on from existence to existence, until, by discipline and insight, those walls Karma has erected between atman and Brahman are erased.

For Buddhism there is an apparent contradiction in theory. How can a no-soul transmit bad—or good—Karma to another no-soul in another existence? How can one temporary coalescence of elements be connected with a previous one? How can a nonexistent self or actor behind the scenes insist that another nonexistent one take up where he left off? Just as Hinduism is never clear as to how the soul fragments that are you and I ever got separated from their Source (Brahman) and became attached to this world of Maya, so Buddhism is never clear about how Karma-inheritance is passed on from individual to individual. Yet clearly something does pass on, since the Buddhist enlightened one beholds in a moment of insight all his past incarnations; and every man exists in this his present embodied—and hence unsaved—condition because of deeds done by a someone or a something in a former existence.

Sometimes the analogy of the wave impulse is used. A wave on the ocean is not a separate being; it is not the moving of certain specific particles of water across the expanse of the ocean, displacing others. The wave is a motion induced by the wind, affecting a series of different particles. Thus there is a con-



tinuous impulse, whose actual elements at each stage of the wave's progress are different. So there is a Karma impulse that carries a certain proportion of good and bad character into another existence composed of a different set of skandhas or elements. And so the karmaic destiny of Henry Jones is continuous with that of John Smith of the last incarnation, though the two do not have one common soul, nor are ever on speaking terms with each other.

There is one more essential likeness between Hindu soul and Buddhist no-soul; both possess an inherent power to achieve salvation largely by their own unaided efforts. This privilege is withheld from the animals; they are souls but incapable of immediate salvation; animal existences represent set terms of penal servitude, which must be endured till the soul's or no-soul's bad Karma is exhausted. Indeed, it is a marvelous privilege to be born as a human being, in whatever form, because man stands at the topmost level of the karmaic ascent, within possible range of salvation. And so many are the unredeemed souls in the universe, that it is as rare for a soul to be born into human form as for the half of a broken ox yoke, cast into the ocean by a peasant, to encircle the neck of a one-eyed turtle that has surfaced at that moment—so Hindu writings tell us. Hinduism, before the advent of bhakti, further restricted the privilege of salvation to those who had worked their way up to the very top of the topmost level—that is, the highest caste. Yet on the whole both Hinduism and Buddhism define man as that creature who is capable of achieving salvation by his own concentrated efforts.

Considerable emphasis must be placed on this capacity, inherent in man as soul and no-soul, to achieve salvation by his own effort or soul force. There is here a curious continuity running through all Indian religion, from its earliest primitive form down to the present. We may presume that in the prehistorical primitivism which is hidden from our sight, the magicians and sorcerers believed that they could force the spirits or powers about them to do their will by virtue of repetition of the proper magic formulae; later, in the early days of sacrificial-minded Brahmanism, the priest took the sorcerer's place; the priest regarded the sacrificial ritual as an infallible means of forcing the gods to do man's will. Once the sacrifice was properly made, the god, even though unwilling, was compelled to carry out the obligation attached to that particular sacrifice; it was the sufficient purchase price for divine favors—a celestially effective formula. And finally, in developed Buddhism and Hinduism, it is taught that there is no power in heaven or earth that can keep the resolute spiritual man from salvation—nothing save his own failure in imposing on himself the proper discipline; his Karma status is more certain than the rising of the sun or the favor of the gods. From the high eminence of abundant good Karma (evidenced by his spiritual capacity and his determination to achieve salvation in this pres-



ent life) he may leap off into the measureless space of unconditioned Brahman or ageless Nirvana, propelled by the very force of his spiritual concentration on salvation. Nothing, no one, can withstand him when he so wills—not even the gods—provided his zeal is according to knowledge. No divine grace is either present or needed.

Modern Hinduism and Buddhism have, to be sure, somewhat changed their former emphasis. In some respects the hope of salvation has been put further away. The number of the supremely saintly who might well be candidates for salvation seems in both religions to be smaller these days. And the achievement of that state of enlightenment which guarantees Nirvana on the cessation of this present life is a rare thing today—if not unheard of; some modern Buddhist sects, indeed, teach that no one has entered or will enter Nirvana for thousands of years. Yet in other respects the way has been made easier. Amida Buddhism, as we have observed, has made salvation in the Pure Land a matter of utmost ease, and Buddhahood is the hope of millions of the faithful. And the bhakti (devotional faith) movement in Hinduism has brought the hope of salvation near to the masses, as well as somewhat altering its form; its devotees are encouraged to believe that emotional intensity, rather than detached passionlessness, is the way to release.

Despite these alterations, however, the basic viewpoint sketched above remains the essential Buddhist-Hindu doctrine of man. Whether or not modern Buddhism subscribes to the classic view of no-soul, or whether it looks on Buddhahood as easy or difficult of attainment; whether modern Hinduism hopes for union with Brahman by means of the classic way of meditative discipline, by the newer way of devotion to one god, by devotion to several of the many gods, or by severe asceticism, both are still one in maintaining that man's true hope and destiny are found within the depths of his own soul. Salvation is to be gained by inward realization and spiritual awareness of the self, not primarily by outward deed—though of course much outward cult still goes on, especially in popular Hinduism. In fact, it really makes little difference what the outward state of the world may be; business goes on as usual; kingdoms rise and wane, and will continue to do so in the same empty meaningless way for millennia to come. Let no one seek for world meanings in all this historical process, or to realize the Kingdom of God on earth; the Kingdom of Self-Realization is within. And the highest and greatest truth that can be known to man is also within.

The realization of truth-within is, then, according to the Orient, man's real destiny. The realization of himself as a being superior in his essence to the outrageous slings of fortune, as capable of conquering the world of time and space, of wiping out the frustrating separation between the mind and its

thoughts, between the soul and its desires, between individual manyness and Eternal Oneness—this is the goal he may reach. Of the peace and unity of that destiny he may now have a foretaste, in those experiences of utter, passionless detachment from life, of distinctionless union with the great Self that pervades all who come to It in mystic mood or emotional ecstasy. And it is the faith of Hindu and Buddhist alike that these experiences are but partial and occasional foretastes of that illimitable peace that shall be a continual state when the weary soul at last goes out into Nirvana and the homeless one returns to Brahman.

*c. Judeo-Christian Divine-Humanism: Man is a responsible moral and personal being. Originally made in the spiritual image of God, he has marred that likeness by willful sinning. He may be renewed in that likeness and restored to full fellowship with God, both individually and socially, here and hereafter, if he repents and lives righteously.*

In this part we shall deal primarily with the Christian conception of man and his destiny. What we say throughout concerning the Christian conception of man will also, with one or two exceptions we shall note, be largely true of both Judaism and Islam; but first we shall need to explore its roots in Judaism.

We may begin then with the Old Testament conception of man. The portrait is relatively simple, for the Hebrew never indulged himself in minute self-analysis as did the Indian. We have already described the Semitic idea of man, in our discussion of the Semitic idea of God, as that of an "opaque" center of conscious activity. Man is the thinking, feeling, acting unity of ordinary experience, strongly conscious of his own individuality. There is, to be sure, some evidence of ecstatic manifestation among the prophets, especially in their earlier appearances; but this is incidental rather than central. Even when the prophet secured his inspiration for a new message from such an ecstatic experience, it was thought of as possession by the spirit of God, not a fading out of ordinary consciousness or the merging of the self with God. And the acceptable Hebrew way of making contact with God was in personal relation to Him by obedience or loyalty, but not by union with Him; in fellowship, but not by absorption.

As to the actual constitution of man, the Hebrew acknowledged a rough division into two parts—sometimes three. Man is usually spoken of as twofold, consisting of body and soul. As with the Hindu, the term used for soul (*nephesh*) is derived from "breath," and means the principle of life and consciousness; it is this which was breathed into Adam when God first made him, and into each man when he is born; it is this which leaves him when he dies. Sometimes a three-fold division is hinted at, with the *ruach* or spirit comprising a subdivision of the spiritual nature of man along with the *nephesh*. In this case



the *nephesh* would signify the animal or physical life, while *ruach* would be more narrowly mental or spiritual.

It should be kept in mind, however, that there never was any absolute distinction drawn between these elements in such a manner as would compromise or divide the concrete unity of the whole body-mind-spirit individual; Judaism never agreed with the Greek dualistic way of contrasting the pure, immaterial soul with the gross, material body. Hence asceticism forms a rather minor feature in Judaism; for according to its teaching the body does not need humiliation or annihilation, but control; even for the life of the next world a body of some sort was considered necessary. Sometimes the body was thought of as the element that dissolved at death, the *nephesh* as that which went to the shadowy underworld of Sheol (Hades), and the *ruach* as the part ascending to God; but such a doctrine was never developed extensively. And when a doctrine of personal immortality did begin to develop in Judaism (200 B.C. to A.D. 100), it involved a resurrection of the body for the soul to inhabit; because the Jew found it hard, if not impossible, to think of a real soul or person without some sort of bodily form.

With St. Paul in the New Testament the Greek influence is beginning to exert itself; there is a sharpening of the rough, inconclusive dualism of Jewish thought into a more intensive form, an opposition between the "law of the spirit" and the "law of the flesh." It is those who obey the law of the spirit and do not indulge the demands of the flesh who will inherit the Kingdom of God. Between the Greek idea of the immortality of the pure, immaterial soul that needed no body—indeed, was glad to be rid of all bodily quality—and the Hebrew call for a resurrected body, Paul makes a compromise that has been somewhat characteristic of Christianity ever since: a resurrection of a "spiritual body." This is not of revived mortal flesh, which "cannot inherit the Kingdom of God," but a "body" of different quality—as the living blade of wheat is different from the dead, decaying grain that gave it birth. He places a Greek soul in a Hebrew resurrection body, so to speak, giving the soul more concrete fullness of substance than the Greek conception, and thinning out the Hebrew fleshliness of the new body.

In general Christianity has followed the Pauline compromise, though the two component elements have not always stayed as neatly balanced as with him; sometimes the seam of their joining shows in disconcerting fashion. The idea of a bodily resurrection has been entertained by most of those in the Christian tradition—at least until rather recently. The rejoining of the resurrected earthly body and the immaterial spirit is to take place at a last judgment, when the fullness of the new life in heaven or hell will be entered into. Yet it is the Greek immaterial soul that is believed to live on in the meantime—either in sleep, or

in reasonable facsimile of the final states of glory or perdition. Catholic Christianity also adds purgatory, a place for the full purification of the imperfect believer for the heavenly life, and limbo, a pleasant near-heaven lacking only the presence of God, for the innocent but non-Christian soul.

Because Greek thought continued for a considerable period to influence Christianity in its early life (and has remained characteristic of one great branch of Christendom, Eastern Orthodoxy, even to the present day), a more sharply defined dualism has been characteristic of it than of either Judaism or Islam. We might say that Jesus indicated that practical kind of dualism which every man feels within himself, when he remarked that "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak"; that Paul made it into the sharper opposition between ungodly flesh and godly spirit; that Neo-Platonism and Pseudo-Dionysius elevated it into the positive cult of bodily abuse. This Greek influence reached its peak in the monastic pattern of medieval Christianity, in which it was held that the body must be humiliated for the sake of the soul's growth. In general, the sharpness of body-soul division has been softened in the years succeeding the medieval period of Christendom; yet a considerable tendency to puritanical suppression of the fleshly still characterizes the Christian attitude toward man.

Notwithstanding this Greek influence, which has led to a considerable ascetic emphasis in Christian thought, the Jewish inheritance is still dominant in the Christian concept of man. For here "man" means the individual personality in its concrete fullness; and this applies to every context in which he is considered. If we think of that part of man which endures after physical death, the Christian insists that even though it be called "soul" it must contain full personal consciousness; the "I" that survives into the next life will be a direct, conscious continuation of the "I" that now is; there will be no minimal carry-over of some blind anonymous wave impulse from one life to another, or loss of personal identity by absorption into the fullness of Brahman. The Christian has kept his idea of the self from any subtilization of it such as might transform it into something scarcely recognizable as the same self with which we do daily business. And so also in the realm of the practical ethical and social relationships of this world; the Christian self works naturally and easily; it is not so abstracted that to achieve its salvation it must live in a world apart. Indeed, Christian circles almost uniformly hold that only by striving against the moral and social evils of this world does man achieve his full spiritual destiny.

This whole tendency toward the concrete active expression of selfhood is, of course, greatly strengthened by the Judeo-Christian conception of a personal God that we outlined in a preceding chapter. God, when conceived to be fully personal, confirms the personal view of man; personality thus becomes a prime category in Christian thinking; personal individuality is not something to be



sloughed off or escaped, as in mysticism, but something to be retained and strengthened as of greatest worth. Whether between man and man, or man and God, the relationship will be that of one fully personal individual to another of the same sort.

The net result of this strongly personalistic conception of both man and God is that Christianity has conceived man primarily as an *ethical* being, and described his destiny in moral terms; this is the essence of his relation to God. Very early in the Old Testament God is portrayed as making a covenant or agreement with His people. Though God no doubt initiated this covenant, and the Hebrew of that era would scarcely have spoken of "co-operation" or "companionship" with his jealous and fiery God, here were the basic elements of a mutual agreement of ethical quality. Each party to the agreement was to be faithful and loyal to the other; moral responsibility on both sides was of its essence. And the subsequent development of this idea of the covenant by the prophets only strengthened its ethical quality; the covenant relation was interpreted by them to mean the faithful service of a just and righteous God by His just and righteous people. Concrete practical righteousness is far more religious and devout, said they, than any amount of ritual performance; only as His people practiced mercy to the poor, honesty in their law courts, humane dealings with the slave and stranger, kept their treaties and contracts, and lived with integrity toward their fellow men, could God consider the covenant kept. Micah sums up the whole matter for the prophets—and for Hebrew-Christian religion—in these famous words: "And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Now Christianity has inherited the prophetic emphasis on the essentially personal and ethical nature of religion; it has made the content of the religious life explicitly ethical, and the achievement of moral character one of the major conditions of final salvation. Jesus' summation of the essential commandments is love to God and man; and whatever love may mean elsewhere in religion, for Jesus it was a thoroughly moralized conception. It meant moral likeness to God that manifests itself most clearly in out-going concern for one's fellow men and active deeds of personal helpfulness toward them. He summed it up most graphically in the parable of the judgment day, in which God shall say: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came unto me. . . . Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:34-37, 40, R.S.V.)

But if man may be saved by a righteous life and deeds of God-like mercy,

there is also an alternative: he may choose as his life pattern evil rather than righteousness. That is, in the Judeo-Christian viewpoint, man may easily become a rebel against God and His chosen way of life; he may deliberately set his will against God's, and frequently has done so. This is called *sin*. And sin very early enters the human scene; in fact, the mythology of sin places it at the very beginning, in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve ate of the fruit "of the tree of knowledge" against God's express commandment, and thus became sinners. Here was no mere ignorant mistake, but a deliberate infraction of known rules. Thus the fall of man, away from God.

The philosophy of man-the-sinner is deeply written into the Hebrew tradition from this point on. Soon after creation God instituted the great purge of the Flood; and though He promised that no such flood would ever again cover the earth, He must continually chastise mankind, and especially His chosen people, for their continued sinning. The story of the Exodus from Egypt, the wanderings in the wilderness, the conquest of Canaan, and the history of the kingdoms during their four and a half centuries till the Exile, are interpreted throughout as a history of the alternate rewards and punishments of His people by a righteous God. It seems, however, that the swing of the pendulum from sin through repentance to righteousness leans ever more lopsidedly toward the sinful extreme, till the nation is carried into a half-century of captivity. Indeed, of all the prophets of the Old Testament, the anonymous one who writes in Isaiah 40-66 is almost the only one who has a substantial message of consolation rather than of judgment for God's people; and he writes out of the depth of the Exile, when divine punishment has reached its climax. The Old Testament informs us that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:21), that he is "shapen in iniquity" and conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5).

Christianity not only inherited this tradition of man the sinner, but even intensified it. Though the Hebrew was sure that men sinned continually, it was the Christian who developed the deeper-dyed version of human sinfulness in his conception of "original" sin, to which we have referred. The deliberate sin of Adam, said the Christian theologians, did not end with him; it has left an ineradicable stain of corruption on the human race, the congenital inability to please God or to serve Him with pure motives. Out of this bitter root of inborn tendency to do evil spring all man's actual sins; they may be cut off repeatedly by repentance, but grow again from their source. John Calvin, following Augustine, and followed in our day by Karl Barth, held that natural man was "totally depraved," *i.e.*, incapable of serving God acceptably. Even his best moral strivings, said Calvin, resulted only in self-righteousness—a sinful counterfeit of God's true righteousness.

And what is the destiny of sinful man? For the Hebrew it was the final de-



struction of the nation by plague, pestilence, or foreign conquest; for later Jewish and Christian thought, it was an immortality of shame and pain. In the book of Daniel, one of the latest Old Testament writings, we read: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). In the New Testament Jesus counsels men to avoid Gehenna at the cost of even an eye, hand, or foot. And so on to the brimstone hell of Revelation, where the smoke of the burning of the wicked persecutors of early Christians shall "ascend upward forever." On the basis of these rather generous hints the Christian imagination went on to produce the vivid and detailed description of a nine-circle inferno by Dante (and the hot burning of hell-fire for the unrepentant, so vigorously portrayed by Protestant evangelists), whose depth of misery and horror is scarcely canceled out by the glories of the corresponding ten heights of heaven.

The matter does not end here, however—else Christianity would not be a religion; for alongside the threat of a final living death for sinful man—and what man is not sinful by nature and deed alike?—there is the prospect of his deliverance. It may be that man has made a shambles of his world, and seriously marred the *imago Dei* within—but there is hope. For God, though righteous Judge, does not operate like impersonal Karma; He is also Forgiver and Redeemer. This does not mean that God is changeable in His attitude toward sin, or that He may be bribed into overlooking it; it means that genuine repentance on the part of the sinner will be followed by God's forgiveness. As the Psalmist puts it, "There is forgiveness with Thee, that thou mightest be feared."

Provided that man turns in his ways from evil to good, as far as possible rights past wrongs and injustices, and in sincerity pledges himself anew to serve God, He will "cover over" man's sin and grant him a new lease on life, as well as the hope of final salvation—though all this be undeserved. In other words, man is not judged by past deeds alone, but also by his future intentions. For the forgiveness of sin is not viewed as so much payment for so much evil-doing, but the renewing of those personal relationships between God and man that were broken by sin. Such unmerited forgiveness is by God's *grace*.

This process of forgiveness has been conceived, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, in two distinct ways; they are not entirely separate from each other, but often receive separate and even opposing emphases. Both views recognize the seriousness of sin and the costliness of repentance, but interpret them differently—especially the process of reconciliation with God. One way is the *priestly* way of reconciling sinful man to righteous God by sacrifice and atoning rite. In the Jerusalem temple men might offer sacrifices for personal sins, evidencing their sincerity by the quality of offering they made and by their ritual profession of

repentance. Yearly the high priest would confess all the people's sins over a live goat (scapegoat) and then drive it forth, laden with community sins, into the wilderness. Modern Judaism, though temple-less, still has as a major festival the Day of Atonement, in which confession is made of the people's sins.

The other way is the *prophetic* way of the moral amendment of the sinful life, by turning from evil deeds. The prophets, indeed, were very critical of the priestly way of atonement, because they were convinced that it often substituted ritual for righteousness, and degenerated into a species of attempted bribery of God. It may be that some of them were in favor of the complete abolition of sacrifice; but at the very least they would all have agreed with Micah's formulation of true religion cited above.

Christianity has taken over both these strains, and tried to combine them. With its greater emphasis on sinfulness, it has felt more keenly than does Judaism the need of man's reconciliation to God and stressed the costliness of the process of forgiveness. Jesus' death on the cross, it holds, was a supreme sacrifice for sin; it was God's sacrifice of His Son, in earthly form, to the bitterness of death; it was His saying to man, "This is what sin does to Me, and to you." This sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, when appropriated by the sinner's faith and accompanied by his renewed moral life, is sufficient atonement for his sin. Catholicism has given priestly expression to this atonement process in its sacramentalism, while Protestantism has given a predominantly prophetic emphasis to forgiveness in its insistence on the amended moral life as condition and evidence of reconciliation with God, but largely discarding—or at least discounting—ritual means.

It might be well to point out that the Judeo-Christian tradition is perhaps unique in its emphasis on forgiveness. The effort of God is continually to reconcile His erring children to Himself. Even His chastising judgments are geared to that end; for when man sees the consequences of his sin he will perchance repent and return. And in Christianity in particular there has been an added emphasis on forgiveness, both between God and man, and man and man, as of the very essence of man's final salvation. God *seeks* man in love to forgive him, according to Jesus; and man serves God, both as he wholeheartedly responds to this seeking by his repentance and change of ways, and as he in turn extends forgiveness to his fellow man. "If you forgive not your brother, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." And what is forgiveness? The forgetting of the precise balance of respective rights and wrongs, both by the wronged and innocent, in the hope of beginning a new and reconciled relationship, and with the prospect of recreating the broken fellowship between God and man, and man and his brother man.

In forgiveness, however achieved, the Jew and Christian find their hope of man's ultimate salvation, both individual and social, both in this life and in



the world to come. *For salvation is but another name for the fullness of forgiveness between God and man.* The prophets believed that repentance on the part of the Hebrew nation would not only solve their internal difficulties, but would save the nation from foreign conquest, and in the end would produce an enduring peace and prosperity on earth. Jeremiah conceived final salvation as a time when the law of God would be written on each man's heart, and he would naturally do God's good will. This is still the essence of Judaism's hope: a Messianic age of peace that will come to the earth when men learn to serve the God of righteousness acceptably. To this hope of a better earth that shall come when God's will is done on earth as in heaven, both Christianity and Judaism have added the hope of personal immortality in the presence of God. The Christian has termed it heaven; and life there—let it be emphasized again—whether as soul or soul in spiritual body, is one of full personal consciousness and continuing personal identity. It is John Smith himself, not his mere soul-substance, or himself in comatose condition, but himself in the fullness of his personal consciousness and being, who enters into personal fellowship with God and the saints.

Thus Christian and Jew look for renewed and immortal men in a redeemed society in a remade earth. The Christian term for it is the "Kingdom of Heaven." When the Kingdom of Heaven shall be finally established in its fullness, it will indeed include the earth; heaven and earth will be one. The classic Christian New Testament description of this state is found in the Revelation of St. John:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God . . . and I heard a great voice . . . saying, Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away. . . . And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut by day—and there shall be no night there. . . . But nothing unclean shall enter it . . . but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. (21:1–4, 22–27, R.S.V.)

### 3. *Comparison and Evaluation*

We have now observed three widely different ways of conceiving of man and his proper destiny; in conclusion, we may sum up the points at which they dif-

fer from each other, and inquire as to the respective merits of the different patterns.

Three major areas in which differences occur may be distinguished: one has to do with the *estimate of man's inherent capacities*; a second is that of the *value put on the individual*; and the third is the *conception of man's ultimate destiny*. In each case the viewpoint endorsed by a religion is an integral part of its total viewpoint, and cannot be separated from its doctrines about the nature of the world; but we shall attempt to consider the various doctrines of man as exclusively as possible.

#### a. *The Capacity of Man*

With regard to their estimates of man we may say, roughly, that Confucianism and humanisms in general are optimistic; they are persuaded that man is essentially good; theories of original sin are repulsive to them. There are animalistic traits in man, certainly; but these are not in themselves sinful—they are only rough spots that need polishing by education. To humanists it is debasing and degrading for man to classify himself continually as a miserable sinner, belaboring himself for those qualities that are only natural to him, and tying himself up in emotional knots with feelings of obscure guilt. Much better that he should turn his emotional and practical energies to observing and dealing with the world in which he now lives; for there is nothing wrong with man that cannot be set right with more education, or—if it cannot be helped—that should be fruitlessly sorrowed over. In other words, Confucianism and humanism are fully convinced that man is capable of working out his own destiny by the use of his natural faculties—or at least able to work out the best one possible for him by means of scientifically applied reason.

Now Hinduism and Buddhism are equally confident of the power of the individual to deal with his own situation and achieve his true destiny—but in an entirely different manner. Their confidence in man is set in a context of despair; their optimism—if it may be called such—is rooted in the conviction that man can *escape* his naturally evil destiny by strenuous effort—not that he can deal with it on its own terms. For just as Confucianism takes the general goodness of the natural world and the worth of man's life in it for granted, so Buddhism and Hinduism are convinced that this world and life in it are ultimately frustrating. (Even though this pessimism is now considerably softened, it has not been destroyed; the Hindu and Buddhist still have small enthusiasm for reforming society.) The world of time and sense is Maya, not ultimately real; nor are its satisfactions genuine. When man ties himself to it with affection and activity he ends in misery and defeat; if verification is needed, just observe human life. And, besides, by virtue of continued rebirths there is the grim pros-



pect of repeating this same pattern of frustration a hundred or a thousand times over. Thus man is incapable of dealing with this world in terms of wresting adequate satisfactions from it; his only alternative is escape. But man can escape—even though gods oppose—by the power of intelligent self-discipline.

The Judeo-Christian estimation of man's capacity contrasts curiously with both the Confucian confidence in man strong-to-deal-with-this-world and the Indian faith in man capable-of-escaping-this-world; it is essentially a faith in man who-by-divine-help-can-change-the-world-and-himself. In other words, it is a blend of both Confucian optimism and Hindu-Buddhist pessimism, though in its own peculiar mixture and form. With regard to the present status of the world the Christian is pessimistic; Christianity has always, by its own account, lived in an evil age, in which the sins of men have brought on the world the imminent judgment of God; it sees man and his world continually on the verge of ruin. And it is pessimistic also with regard to man as an individual. "Natural" man, to the Christian, is a sinner, out of step with God, weakened in his capacity to do good. Nor is he able to do good by himself; only with divine aid can he achieve goodness; he is *not* able to work out his own salvation without supernatural help—this in flat contradiction to India and China—but needs a saviour and God; or perhaps we should say this is in flat contradiction to the *classic* Confucian and Indian patterns, since many in both cultures have also long since come to depend on saviour gods and saints.

Yet there is a difference. The Judeo-Christian pessimism is partial and conditional; man's powers have been weakened by sin but not utterly destroyed; the image of God within him is only blurred, not obliterated. And though he may be unable in his own strength to deal with his world adequately, or achieve his own true destiny, there is at hand help adequate for his needs. The good within him will be strengthened by the superabundant goodness of God, which will enable him to remake the world and fulfill his personal destiny. Even the very virulence of the Christian's oft-repeated condemnation of contemporary society evidences his hopes for that world; he is terribly unhappy about a world that has become so foul when it might have been so fair. Roughly speaking, India says that the world of society is neither capable of being saved nor worth it; and China says that it does not need saving—except in the secondary sense of bettering it slightly by the application of practical wisdom. But the Christian maintains both that the world needs a radical salvation, and that, if men will repent, there are good prospects of saving it.

#### b. *The Worth of Man*

Man can save himself by rational moral effort; man can escape an impossible life by withdrawal from it into himself; man can save himself if God will help

him—these are the respective Confucian, Hindu-Buddhist, and Judeo-Christian estimates of man's capacities. What do they say about his worth? This follows directly from the answers to the first questions.

Confucianism finds in the man that we know empirically—that is, man, the physical, moral, and social being—a creature of value; it is worth our best human efforts to see what we can make out of him and his society. We do not look to any divine status in the universe—though undoubtedly he stands at the top of the order of earthly beings—nor to the certification of Heaven, to give him his essential worth as a human being; or so, at least, modern humanism would say. He is of essential worth because of his intrinsic capacity to think, to feel, and to create; these valuable powers ought to be drawn out to their fullest extent in all men. In them lies man's worth—not in some transcendent soul destined for another life.

Hinduism and Buddhism state it somewhat differently—in fact, in considerable practical opposition. Both devalue the empirical individual almost completely; his quality as a person, the character traits that distinguish him from another, his uniqueness of mental or physical capacity and skill—all this is essentially worthless. Such individuality belongs to the world of Maya, and its development is a striving for the wind—a frustrating sort of shadow-boxing. Indeed, true wisdom looks with compassion on the human individual, who by the inherent nature of human life is caught in his individuality as in a web. He may be pitied, but can never be loved or hated; for the individual we love or hate is an unreal illusion, as it is the hater and lover.

That self that is finally esteemed to be of worth is a complete abstraction from the living man. He indeed is worth saving, because he should be spared the pain of reincarnation; so many less misery-bound, pain-filled existences! But he is not the man we know—the concrete individual of name and form who is to be cherished and loved; he is an anonymous bit of soul force that must be returned to its home in Brahman (says Hinduism); or a miscellaneous collection of elements gathered about a life impulse that ought to be snuffed out in Nirvana (says Buddhism).

Christianity and Judaism here are nearer Confucianism than to India's religions. They love the concrete historical person; they believe that the body-soul man is of intrinsic worth, and that both he and his earthly societies ought to be saved in their concrete fullness. Yet there are profound differences between Christianity and Confucianism. Christianity does not unqualifiedly endorse humanity, as humanism tends to do. The worth of man, it holds, roots in his divine origin and likeness; man is not so much valuable as a human being, but as a potential son of God; though a sinner, he still has the divine imprint, and *this* is his chief value. He is to be saved in all phases of his life; but his more



essential salvation consists in the salvation of his soul rather than his body, and in the next life rather than this one. Hence Christianity has often tended in practice toward an other-worldly interest in men's souls rather than their bodies, which it has expressed by its monasticism and Puritanism; but at the same time it has kept turning back to its conviction—gained from Jewish sources—that earthly life also is good, and man in his earthly form supremely worth redeeming. In fact, modern Western humanism has gained much of its enthusiasm for man from Judeo-Christian sources, even though it has completely rejected Judeo-Christian theology.

c. *The Final Destiny of Man*

We need say only a few words about man's final destiny, as described by the three types of faiths we have surveyed. They have been fully described in classic sources, but even if we had no such descriptions, could easily be inferred from their other features. Confucianism thought of human destiny primarily in terms of a better society and the more comfortable living conditions that man could achieve for himself. Modern humanism would say that man is to achieve his true destiny by calling to his aid any and all possible scientific techniques that will enable him to increase his health and enjoyment of life, enlarge his creativity to the utmost, and make himself as far as possible at home in this world. And the good society, which man *may* be destined to achieve by his own efforts, is the society that to a maximum degree would guarantee these goals for the maximum number of men. It is conceivably possible in the foreseeable future.

The true destiny of man, so far as Buddhism and Hinduism are concerned, is escape from individual existence, either into formless Brahman or indescribable Nirvana. When manyness has become oneness, when individuality has been merged into sameness, when knower is one with all knowledge, the desires of the desirous find that there is nothing truly desirable, and the fever of life's urgency is reduced to absolute zero; or when all other desires have been burned away by the intensity of love to Rama or Krishna, then man has reached his true home and will wander no more; he will have fulfilled his true being, and be no more subject to frustration. Indeed, the ultimate goal for all creation will be reached when all Maya (visible existence) is reabsorbed back into Brahman, and there is nothing left but the primordial unity.

For the Semite, the destiny of man is conditional. The final state of man is sharply divided into two halves, black and white, hell and heaven. This is no temporary discipline, like the Hindu and Buddhist purgatories, which—though they may engulf the wandering spirit for thousands of human years—finally, when the force of their evil Karma is exhausted, yield their prisoners to the on-

ward, upward progress toward salvation. It is viewed as a final, irrevocable duality. Man achieves either the one or the other; and—once the final verdict has been rendered at the end of a human being's one earthly life—there is no subsequent journeying from one abode to the other. Of course Catholicism provides a vestibule to heaven, purgatory, through which all but the veriest saints must pass on their way to blessedness; but only those finally destined for blessedness pass its portals; those doomed to perdition do not enter here, for no purgation can now redeem them; thus even here the final duality is not avoided but only made for a time to seem less absolute.

Which destiny shall be called man's *true* destiny? Presumably heaven. This is what his divine origin urges him toward, and what his spiritual capacities—if renewed by God's grace—fit him for. The writer of Revelation perhaps conceived also that the New Jerusalem would take up the major and important part of the earth, while hell would be in a far-off, out-of-the-way corner of the universe, so that for practical purposes heaven and the renewed earth would be all. Yet there was always the possibility that men might in the end choose the way to death rather than to life. But in either case there was no fading away of individuality; the same individual, who knew himself to be the same, would continue to exist consciously in heaven or hell—though presumably in heaven his being would be expanded to its fullest capacity, whereas in hell it would perhaps be reduced to a minimum.

#### d. *Evaluation*

How then shall we estimate these accounts of human nature and destiny? Perhaps an observation of the changes already made in these patterns through the years, and by virtue of their contact with each other, will give us some clues.

Buddhism has been forced out of its monkish cell and negative interpretation of life into a more positive and active role. Its reabsorption in India into Hinduism, after a few centuries of independent existence, was due in part to Moslem invasion of Buddhist districts; but it was also because Buddhism's desire to make all men into monks and all women into nuns did not accord with India's basic desire to perpetuate an earthly community; it was too negative even for pessimistic India. And wherever else Buddhism has spread—China, Japan, or Malaysia—this negativism has been largely lost. The Chinese Buddhist monk eats two and three meals per day, not the prescribed meager one, and wears only a patchwork badge on his robe in token of the patchwork garment worn by the Indian follower of the Buddha in the 6th century B.C. He seldom speaks of an utter disregard for the world—though usually he takes a passive attitude toward things political and social; such is the still strong effect of his traditional pessimism. Still further: the world-denying trance is largely a thing



of the past; its modern equivalent is the Zen meditation, which—though emptiness of mind seems its goal—leaves the meditator refreshed for his regular duties. Indeed, Zen is a favorite faith among those of the Japanese military caste. Some few Buddhist sects have attained considerable evangelical fervor and an almost prophetic social-reform note in their teaching, such as the Nichiren sect of Japan. Many others have sought—rather weakly and unsuccessfully, it must be admitted—to imitate the active social concern of the Christian missionary.

Hinduism, too, has been forced from its other-worldliness. Some of this pressure has come from within; the bhakti groups, whose way of salvation we have described, have rejected the classical portrait of remainderless absorption in Brahman as man's true destiny; they speak of the heavens of enjoyment, gained through devotional love to their god, as preferable to such absorption. The break is not great, but it is obviously a move away from mystic negativism. And there have been pressures from without; activist Moslems and Christians have for many generations been members of the Indian community. Their influence has not gone unfelt: there have been efforts by the Sikhs to join Moslem and Hindu in one faith; others by the Bramo Samaj to reform Hindu society according to a Christian-Hindu pattern; Arya Samaj, in loyal Hindu fashion, has sought reform in a "back to the Vedas" context. And still further, economic and social pressures are breaking up—"abolishing" is the hopeful word of the new national government—the ancient caste structure by which the other-worldly life has been shielded from contact with the outer world. The high caste Brahmin and the holy man must increasingly mingle with their fellows, and all Indians of all persuasions must perforce concern themselves more actively with this world of Maya and its inhabitants.

The Confucian pattern, in its traditional form, is largely a matter of the past, though its social-moral impress still lingers on in China, and will for generations to come. As predominantly a social system it early demonstrated its failure to meet religious needs; its perspective and resources were too limited. It had no hope for the defeated man; when his plans failed, he was through. It had no supporting sense of doing the will of a power greater than man, no guiding sense of tracing out in its knowledge the designs of cosmic mind, no invigorating sense of contact with superhuman being. It had no frame of ultimate meaning into which to fit human plans and purposes, and hence was weak both in its understanding and in motivation for its social life. Thus it was forced to turn to Buddhism for as much of these as the latter could offer; but the combination was not conspicuously successful.

The success of the modern exponent of the Confucian philosophy, humanism, as a substitute for religions of the traditional sort, is yet to be determined.

"Soft" humanism of the kind proposed by Julian Huxley, as philosophy and sometimes as religion, is primarily a negative movement, or—as one author terms it—one of "disintegration."<sup>8</sup> It calls itself humanism in reaction to anything superhuman in belief. It rejects the idea of God, of any revelation of His will for men, of any supernatural standards of goodness that men shall follow. On the positive side it seeks to glorify human accomplishments in politics, art, and science, and looks to the latter for its guidance. It hopes for the infinite betterment of the human lot. "Hard" humanism takes the form of Communism, which rejects everything rejected by soft humanism, but adds to it a fanatical belief in the rightness of the economic and social views it would force upon all men.

The question facing both humanisms is whether men will be permanently satisfied with the foreshortened world view they offer him. Will the same dissatisfactions with a purely this-worldly estimate of man and portrayal of his destiny that made Confucianism unsatisfactory, make the new humanism likewise unsatisfactory? Is it enough for man to limit his goals and hopes to the few years that are his on earth, and to the accomplishment of what he can do in his own unaided strength, without the sense of any cosmic significance in his efforts and hopes? Can a fierce enthusiasm for the Good Society make up for the love of God?

Alterations have also appeared in the Judeo-Christian pattern of thinking about man and his destiny. The basic articles of doctrine have not always been affected, but the interpretations of those doctrines have showed what we might call a shift toward a more humanistic position; for example, the doctrines of heaven and hell have been softened in their sharpness; in much of Protestant Christianity there has been a practically complete disappearance of emphasis on the latter. The absoluteness of the distinction called for between those worthy of eternal life and those worthy of eternal death, has seemed untrue to what we observe of human nature; and its enforcement appears to be either unworthy of God, or too hard a task even for His omniscience. The Universalist denomination, indeed, appeared in 19th-century American Protestantism as a protest against such teaching, insisting that in the end God would redeem all souls, giving them unlimited second and third chances at salvation.

One might say also that the Christian doctrine of God has been somewhat more humanized; that God has become less of the grim Judge, more of the Saviour and Companion; His affective and "emotional" nature, responsive to human need, has been increasingly stressed. Superlatives like all-powerful, all-good, all-wise, and so forth, have been less emphasized; a renewed interest in

<sup>8</sup> Charles Hartshorne, *Beyond Humanism*, Willett Clark, 1937, Chap. II.



the doctrine of the finiteness (limited power) of God has made its appearance. And this has had its bearing on the growing practical, this-worldly emphasis in Christianity. Christianity has become socially aware in recent generations, and has given progressively more of its efforts to social betterment of one sort or another; practical charities, political activity, the study of economic and social problems, and a concern with mental health have increasingly occupied its attention. Christianity today is greatly concerned to prove that its humanism is of a more dynamic variety than either the soft or hard forms of contemporary antireligious humanism.

This "new" humanism is not foreign to Christian tradition, though it has sometimes been obscured. It roots in the Jewish nonascetic approach to life and active concern with this world; it springs directly out of the Semitic idea of a personal God, Who values and cherishes human personality. And it received a powerful impulse and exemplification in the teachings and practice of Jesus; for he concerned himself with human welfare at every level of man's being—physical, emotional, mental, social.

The question before the Semitic humanisms of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity appears to be: "Can you create a more valid, less limited humanism than your rivals?" Those humanisms, as we have noted, seem to curtail sharply the interest of man in everything but his immediate problems and concerns—to center attention on the fulfillment of present physical and social needs. Questions concerning ultimate meanings of life, belief in a total divine purpose in the world, devotion to any absolute values beyond and above what seem socially useful, are all discarded by them as either impossibilities or trivialities. The proper antidote to them would seem to be a religious faith in the ultimate being and purpose of a directive will (God), which gives meaning to the whole of life, roots the sense of human worth solidly in the universe (because God too is personal, and hence man is no mere evolutionary accident), calls him to meet some absolute standard of perfection, and believes in the persistence of human personality and identity beyond the short span of physical life granted to men. Such a view keeps the infinite perspective in human life; and the essence of a genuine and adequate humanism is that it recognizes that even the humblest tasks of earthly life are performed best when man can also look beyond them to infinite horizons.

## Chapter XXVIII

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### WHY DO MEN SUFFER?

1. BECAUSE HUMAN EXISTENCE IS AN UNFORTUNATE ILLUSION
2. BECAUSE MEN ALLY THEMSELVES WITH EVIL
3. BECAUSE REALITY IS A SYSTEM OF NEUTRAL FORCES

Sooner or later all religious views of the world must deal with the fact of human suffering. For this is a world in which there are disappointment and frustration; it is filled with pain, disease, and death. Such are the facts; and in this form we might call our problem the problem of suffering. All the practical measures we have taken to avoid discomfort, overcome pain, and lengthen life in the face of death, are attempts to solve this problem.

But there is also an intellectual aspect to the solution of the problem. Men have asked since the beginning of time, in one way or another: "*Why* do we suffer?" In this form the problem of suffering has become the problem of evil, with which philosophy and religion have concerned themselves world without end. Thus the *content* or raw material of the problem of evil is *suffering*; but its *form* is the attempt to find a rational *explanation*—to fit suffering into some total scheme of meaning.

Philosophy's approach to the problem is more detached than religion's; it is often a questioning whether the problem is a problem at all; or whether this statement of the problem of suffering—*i.e.*, asking the *why* of it—has any meaning. It may prefer to say: "Why not simply recognize suffering as a fact and try to do something about it, without worrying about whether it has a 'meaning'?" And it may go on to ask, in the hope of softening the sharpness of suffering: "Are there any ways in which suffering can be made to contribute to human understanding or welfare? Can not philosophic detachment from life give a perspective which will lessen the anguish of suffering by enabling man to become emotionally reconciled to it?"

When philosophy, however, seeks to create an all-inclusive system of explanation, or some intellectual understanding that will take in all the facts of life



without remainder, it begins to experience the real force of the problem religion faces in trying to make its explanations. It must ask: "Where does suffering fit into the total pattern of reality we have described? Is it an irrational principle, which disrupts the order of the world and destroys its unity?" In other words, it must answer the question as to why there should be physical suffering and moral evil in such a world system as it seeks to establish.

Now these are precisely the problems of religion; indeed, it is in religion that the problem of evil, strictly speaking, has its rise and achieves its most acute form. For religion takes on itself a double burden: half of the burden is its attempt to provide an intellectual framework of explanation or meaning for the world, and hence also of suffering; and the other half is its attempt to provide for mankind a way of salvation from that evil—a way better than any other. No other discipline of thought quite attempts this Herculean task, and therefore does not meet the problem in its maximum form.

Let us be clear as to how religion creates for itself this peculiar intensity of the problem of evil. If, on the one hand, it did not hold to any conviction about there being an ultimate meaning, plan, or purpose in the universe, it would not have to answer the question, "Why?" for if one takes the physical world just as it is, he may accept its brute facts just as they are; he will know that to ask *why* there is pain has no meaning, for there is no explanation to seek beyond knowing *how* it happens; for example, that a toothache results from the decay of protective enamel. But religions have said: "There *is* a world meaning, purpose, and plan; there *is* a moral and spiritual order; there *is* a good God who governs the world and works out His purposes in it." This insistence has been of the essence of religious thought and life. But to maintain this to be true opens the way to the inevitable question: "If what you say is true, then why should there be evil (physical suffering and moral evil) in a world of spiritual order, or one governed by a good God?" And the more definite the pronouncements of religion about the world order have been, the more acute the intellectual problem posed by suffering.

And what of the additional burden laid on religion because of its claim to be a way of salvation for men? If it is to be a way of salvation it must save men from their suffering—or provide the best possible way to deal with it. Besides an intellectual explanation that makes sense, it must provide a plan of action guaranteed to vanquish suffering or to by-pass it. For some religions—notably the Semitic—this has meant a practical effort to alleviate it; and among these, Christianity has been outstanding for its large-scale philanthropies. But all religions, including Christianity, seek to go beyond this surface treatment of the problem, and concern themselves with a way of salvation that will eventually free men from evil, once and for all, both as individuals and societies.

Eastern religions hope to achieve it by escape from individual conscious existence; Western faiths by achievement of a maximum personal consciousness in a world and society utterly and finally free of evil.

It can scarcely be over-emphasized that a religion's solution to the problem of evil is one of the most important things about it; here is its focal point, so to speak, both intellectually and practically. Here it faces its hardest intellectual problem; and here it meets its greatest practical challenge. The treatment of evil is of course not separate from the rest of the religious structure; it is intimately connected with the ideas a religion entertains concerning God, the world, and human nature; these ideas are inextricably interlocked, and one implies the other. Hence we shall not be surprised to find that the three major divisions among faiths, recognized in the previous chapter, repeat themselves here when we consider how these same faiths deal with evil.

We may classify the religious formulations of the problem of evil as being of three major types. The first is the *metaphysical* approach of Hinduism and Buddhism. These religions hold that evil is intrinsic to the structure of human life itself; it can be dealt with only by a denial or detachment from that life. The second is the *ethical and personal* approach of the mid-Eastern religions, which say that suffering is the result of the opposition of personal beings, human or demonic, or both, who are in deliberate rebellion against God. This condition can be dealt with only by a radical moral conversion on the part of man—by his absolute loyalty to goodness, and his complete opposition to evil. The third is the Confucian approach, which scarcely recognizes the problem of evil as such, but deals directly with specific ills as they arise in experience by the use of *practical and scientific* means that are to be empirically discovered.

1. *The Hindu-Buddhist Solution: Evil Is a Name for the Total Human Situation. (It is inherent in the nature of individual conscious life. It is to be escaped by detachment.)*

Having observed Hinduism and Buddhism in other connections, we should now be well prepared to understand their interpretation of evil—whether we agree with it or not. It is implied by the way in which these two religions seek salvation—by withdrawal from the world and escape from personal consciousness. Now, if this is the manner in which evil is to be escaped, then evil must be inherent in the world of time and space, and in our existence in it as personal beings. Indeed, such a view is implied by their ideas of the nature of reality: the space-time world in which we live, our own personal existences, are unreal; their substantiality is deceiving—a pseudosubstantiality. And what is unreal—especially if it deceitfully appears to be real, and thus leads men to value and serve it under false pretenses—is ultimately evil.



This is precisely the case, of course, according to these faiths. Evil inheres in the very human situation itself; to be humanly existent is essentially evil; evil is of the essence of the metaphysical situation in which we find ourselves. For Hinduism evil means that somehow fragments of the World-Soul or essence—that is, human souls—have become isolated from their Source, and will be unhappy and in an evil situation till they can return to it through salvation's doorway. Just how that separation took place is left unclear; there was no fall from a perfect state in a Garden of Eden. Nevertheless it happened somehow, and men have worsened the separation by their ignorant deeds. In Buddhism the metaphysics of the situation are less evident, but the practical realities are equally gruesome; existence is suffering from beginning to end, in all its forms, said Buddha. To exist is to suffer; and to suffer is to be in a truly evil condition.

It is true that Buddhism speaks of a prince of demons, Mara, who is reputed to have tempted the Buddha himself—both to keep him from achieving his enlightenment, and to persuade him to go straight into final Nirvana without waiting to communicate his saving enlightenment to his fellows. Also in the purgatories at the depths of the transmigration circle evil spirits are to be found; but these never achieve the status of any cosmic principle of evil of the proportions of the Zoroastrian Ahriman, or even of the Christian Satan; they seem rather to be decorations added by popular fancy. And we have earlier observed how Hinduism included, in its thinking about the universe, the forces of destruction in the being of the god Shiva, for example, in order to avoid splitting the universe in two between life and death, or good and evil. Thus neither faith gives us any ultimate rationale of the presence of evil in the world, but accepts it as the eternal condition of the world of Maya, and of all the souls, animal or human, involved in it.

Though neither faith thus offers an ultimate explanation of how evil first came into the world, or why a world of this particular sort should exist, both have a consistent explanation as to why evil occurs in each specific form in which we now find it. It may be a mystery, says Hinduism, as to how soul substance first got separated from its Source, into you and me. And it is very tragic and inexplicable, says Buddhism, that existence should be essentially suffering. But we *do* know why you or any other human being is now sad, unfortunate, sick, crippled, poor, or born into a low caste; it is because of what you have done in a former birth; the Law of Karma explains it. And this is really more important than ultimate explanations of the origin of evil, because it tells you exactly how you came to be in your present evil condition, and hence how you may escape it. The mechanics of evil and its cure are here unveiled.

Thus it is that the Indian spends little of his religious time worrying about the problem posed by Job in the Old Testament: "*Why* should the righteous

suffer?" because the Indian holds that man has been the sole creator of his present condition, good or bad, and holds his future destiny in his own hands. And this solution of the proximate—if not the ultimate—mystery of evil has appealed to many. Radhakrishnan writes of the Law of Karma:

There is no doctrine so valuable in life and conduct as the Karma theory. Whatever happens to us in this life we have to submit to in meek resignation, for it is the result of our past doings. Yet the future is in our power, and we can work with hope and confidence. Karma inspires hope for the future and resignation to the past. It makes man feel that the things of the world, its fortune and failures, do not touch the dignity of the soul. Virtue alone is good, not rank, or riches, not race or nationality. Nothing but goodness is good.<sup>1</sup>

Thus is the mystery largely removed from evil. It is no opposing force in the world, dark, mysterious, malevolent; it is no ineradicable taint in the human heart. Evil, in general, is one of the inevitable conditions of human existence in time and space; there is nothing personal or vindictive about it, because it is a name for an impersonal situation. And though this might seem worse than direct ill will on the part of men or demons, just because it *is* so mechanical and nonpersonal, actually this is not entirely true—for two reasons. One is that we may count on Karma to advance the cause of good, just as truly as it confirms the penalties of evil; evil thus becomes a manageable quantity each man can control, not a mystery against which he fights ignorantly in the darkness. The very fact that it can be mechanically dealt with lessens its threat.

And the second encouraging factor is that evil applies only to the realm of Maya; it belongs only to time-space existence, which is but a shadow of that True Reality that one senses in his moments of illumination. Therefore because it is fundamentally unreal it holds no ultimate threat or power over mankind; man may be liberated from its power, in fact, just as soon as he is able to realize its insubstantiality and its illusory quality. Thus:

Evil is the denial in conduct by the ego of the supremacy of the whole. . . . Evil is unreal in the sense that it is bound to be transmuted into good. It is real to the extent that it requires effort to transform its nature.<sup>2</sup>

And what shall we say about the final solution of the problem of evil? Are we to expect a new heaven and a new earth, in which evil will be done away? No; the world of time and space in which we live will always be the same, as long as it exists. Of course it may change considerably in external ways—new social forms, political patterns, and the like—but these will bring no basic solu-

<sup>1</sup> *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.



tion to its difficulties; frustration and suffering are inherent in the conditions of time-and-space existence. However pleasant life may become, it cannot escape old age and death, or transcend its fundamentally frustrating desires. Even the gods of polytheistic Hinduism are held to be subject to a wearing-out of their good Karma, and hence to a descent to lower (human?) levels of existence. The only ultimate solution to the problem of evil is from within, by the progressive detachment of the soul's love from the elements of this world, its insight into their impermanence and unreality, and its final escape from them. Only in the reunion of all the many souls of animals and men with the One (Brahman), or the going out of them all into Nirvana, could the problem of evil be *totally* solved; but that is an utterly improbable hope. Meantime let each man attend to his own salvation from evil, and help his fellow along the way as he may.

2. *The Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, and Moslem Answer: Evil is a Principle of Hostility to the Good Will of God. (It is perhaps of cosmic scope, and is shared in by man when he sins. It must be directly opposed wherever found. In the end it will be overcome by the joint efforts of God and His redeemed ones.)*

The problem of evil is much more serious for this group of religions than for any other. Not only do they take a more serious view of its quality and quantity, but they have also committed themselves to a theoretical position that makes its explanation most difficult. Their faith is that the world is governed by a good and all-powerful God; Christianity especially describes him as a God of love. How, then, can the present condition of the world be explained? To put it in Job's terms: "Why does a righteous God allow a righteous man to suffer? Surely God cannot approve the cruelties, the wars, the sin, and the suffering which go on daily? How can He be responsible for the vast destructiveness of nature? If God is good, is He not powerful enough to work His will in the world; or if He is all-powerful, how can He then be good?"

This is the problem of theistic religions; what have been their solutions? The primary one offered under various forms is that men have set themselves in opposition to God, and, as a result, He has punished them with disabilities and troubles. The mythical form given to this in the Hebrew Scriptures is of course the story of Adam, who, because of his deliberate disobedience to God's command, was not only cast out of the Garden, but forced to earn his living by hard labor. And his wife and partner in sin was also punished; she was condemned to bear her children in pain, as well as to be forever subject to the will of her husband. And thus it has been ever since for the children of Adam and Eve.

And it is further stated in the same account, that even the natural world about man was affected by his disobedience. There are certainly present in it many harsh realities and frustrating conditions: nature is as often destructive as creative; thorns and thistles as often reward the efforts of man as good crops; drought or flood, hot sun or cold frost, hurricane or earthquake may afflict him; disease, plague, danger, old age, and death are his appointed lot; "Threescore years and ten, and if by reason of strength they be fourscore, yet is their strength labor and sorrow." Or, in the words of the New Testament, "the creation groaneth in bondage up till now, desiring to be delivered"—a persistent undertone of pain in all sentient life. This "natural evil" in the world has been caused by sinful opposition on the part of man, his marring of a once perfect creation by evil deed, says this account; the frustrations attendant on living in such a world are his punishment.

Before we proceed further with our account two comments may be made. One is that the reason for the development of such an explanation of evil is obvious; it roots in the animistic account of reality that theism has inherited—that is, that the world is controlled by personal spirits. With animism it was a great number of varied spirits directly controlling each phenomenon in nature; but with theism it is the sovereign control of a Divine Ruler. The point is that events must ultimately be explained by such a spiritual agency—not by mere mechanical cause and effect. Hence, when the Hebrew sought to explain the evil in the world, he would obviously conceive it to be the work of such agencies. Does man suffer? Then some power is punishing him for his misdeeds. And since, for the Hebrew, there was only one real Power in the world, suffering must come by His agency—or at least by His permission.

The second observation is that those religions that inherit the Semitic conception of personality as being a center of conscious activity and purpose, whether in God or man, allow man considerable freedom of action. He has the power to set himself limitedly against the will of God, and frustrate some of His lesser purposes—though not His major ones. (Islam and Christian predestinarians might theoretically qualify such an account, by refusing to allow that any action of any man occurs without God's willing it, but the practical attitude of both assumes human freedom.) Probably the original data for this conviction was simply the observation that there were men, even among God's own chosen people, who did set themselves against Him, despite the fact that He was infinitely more powerful than they. Later generations have asked: "Why did God give man the power thus to oppose himself to the divine will, and so create evil in the world?" And the Judeo-Christian answer has been that in no other way could God create genuine personalities capable of goodness and of fellowship with Him. For goodness is good only when chosen; were



man a mere robot, going through righteous motions, he would not be truly righteous. God is therefore willing to limit Himself by giving man some freedom. But of course freedom to do good means also freedom to do evil—else it is not genuine. Hence, as the inevitable consequence of human freedom, moral evil (sin) comes into the world.

Yet such an explanation did not seem to do justice to the facts of evil—even as the Semites saw them. Could it be that mere man's opposition to God had really caused all the evil that was to be found on the earth, both in nature and society? Originally the Hebrew was probably willing to settle for such an explanation; but as his conception of the greatness of God grew, and with the writer of Isaiah 40-66 he began to think of Him as the omnipotent creator in the fullest sense, he came also to ask: "How is it, then, that everything in the world is not done according to such a mighty will? Why is it that we, His chosen people, continue to suffer under heathen oppression?" The only explanation would seem to be that God had considerable opposition to His work, beyond and above what human beings might offer.

Thus the figure of Satan grew in stature, along with that of God. We have already noted that the original tempter in the Hebrew Bible was the "serpent"; but the story seems really to explain man's innate hostility to such reptiles—even according to its own account—rather than being a full-blown doctrine of Satan. It may be questioned whether the serpent should be identified with Satan at all. So also the "Satan" of Job's account is well under divine control, since he may tempt Job only by God's permission; he has almost more the character of a wayward son or black sheep among the sons of God who present themselves before Him (Job 1, 2), than of the Great Adversary. But when the apocalyptists, with their visions of world's end and God's dramatic rescue of His people from their enemies, began to write in the immediate pre-Christian period, Satan came into his own as the great opposer of God and His people, the arch-enemy of all goodness.

There is little doubt that we have here among the apocalyptists the result of some Zoroastrian influence, as well as the natural effect of historical and religious development; for Jew and Zoroastrian were in contact with each other during the Jewish Exile in Babylon and later. In any case, Satan or the devil was by now firmly intrenched in the Jewish teaching as a being of major proportions. And the New Testament, of course, picks up the account from there. Jesus is accused of being in league with Beelzebub, the prince of demons, which he denies. On one occasion, after the seventy have returned from their first mission, he thanks God that he has seen "Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18). We are not unprepared to find the Revelation of St. John portraying the Christians—then in the midst of their first full-scale Roman perse-

cutions—as locked in a bitter struggle with the hosts of Satan as well as those of Rome. He is described as “the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan” (20:2).

Once launched fully into the stream of Christian tradition by New Testament writings, the conception of Satan played a major role in Christian thinking for the next fifteen hundred years; Satan was standard theological furniture through the late Roman and early barbarian periods. And the medieval Christian was almost evenly divided in his attribution of calamity and disaster to the agency of Satan and his multitudinous cohorts—who lay in wait at every turn of man’s life—and to Divine wrath. Sometimes, in fact, the two cooperated: God let Satan punish men for their sins—and what right had they to protest? Luther once threw a bottle of ink at Satan. And it was John Milton, English Puritan poet of the 17th century, who finally portrayed Satan in classic form as the angel Lucifer, who before the world began had rebelled against God in arrogant pride, and ever since has been His chief opponent and man’s tempter:

The infernal Serpent; he it was whose guile,  
 Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived  
 The mother of mankind, what time his pride  
 Had cast him out from Heaven, with all his host  
 Of rebel Angels, by whose aid, aspiring  
 To set himself in glory above his peers  
 He trusted to have equalled the Most High.  
 . . . Him the Almighty Power  
 Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky.  
 . . . Satan, with bold words  
 Breaking the horrid silence, thus began:  
 What though the field be lost?  
 All is not lost—the unconquerable will,  
 And study of revenge, immortal hate,  
 And courage never to submit or yield.<sup>3</sup>

With Islam the case is somewhat different. There is, to be sure, a doctrine of Satan evidencing some of the same Zoroastrian influence we have noted in post-Exilic Judaism. The devil is a supremely evil spirit whom Moslems call *Iblis*, a contracted form of *Diabolus*, or *Shaitin*, a variant of the Zoroastrian “Satan,” and he has the same general characteristics as the Zoroastrian and Christian devil. He is the head of a host of demons, the lord of hell; over against him stands the Archangel Michael, with his heavenly hosts, continually engaging him in battle. It is presumably Iblis who has turned the infidel away from the

<sup>3</sup> *Paradise Lost*, Book I.



true faith of the Prophet, and who continually tempts the faithful Moslem to disobedience.

We may ask at this point whether these faiths consider God to be actually in charge of the world, or whether His sovereignty is in fact severely compromised. In general, they all hold that God will win in the end; but the importance and power given Satan varies somewhat with the faith. In Islam, Iblis never plays a very convincing role; he seems more like window dressing, or a straw man set up for purposes of dramatic excitement, than a genuine opponent of Allah. The world is so thoroughly under the control of Allah, down to the least thought and action of the most obscure man, that Satan never has a chance. It is Allah who inscrutably afflicts men with ills—no doubt for their final good.

At the other extreme stands Zoroastrianism, which, as we have noted, divides the contemporary world almost equally between Ahura Mazda and Ahriman; and somewhere between stand Judaism and Christianity. In Judaism it is perhaps only in the immediate pre-Christian and early Christian era that the concept of Satan is important. In Christianity its influence was both greater and longer; only rather recently has its force declined. But all of them at all periods—no matter how furious the battle seemed—believed that the Master Chess Player could contain the moves of his Opponent and win the final victory—though perchance with some loss along the way.

If we press these faiths one step further to ask: "How did Satan ever come to be created?" the answer is roughly the same; Satan was created morally good, and changed himself into Satan by his own free deed—as the archetype and inspirer of man's disobedience. Zoroastrianism, we have noted, *did* suggest that Ahriman was evil from the very beginning, awakened to counteractivity by the activity of goodness. But in any case some mystery still remains. Why should Allah, Ahura Mazda, or God have created him, knowing presumably that he would thus in the end become evil? And the only answer given is that He wished to prove men, or knew that in the long run the good in His creation would outweigh the evil: hence a world with Satan was better than no world without Satan; only in a world of free moral agents could there ever be genuine goodness.

If evil is thus a militantly aggressive and demonic force in the universe, which lures men into sin and could even carry man down to his eternal destruction, strenuous measures must be taken to combat it, and drastic remedies proposed to overcome it—or him; and such drastic strenuousness has indeed been the characteristic reaction of these faiths to evil. They have evangelized untiringly for their beliefs—especially Islam and Christianity—in order to save men from those delusions of Satan—men's other religious faiths, or their lack of faith. They have sought to mold the societies of this earth according to the pattern

of their convictions, even fighting long and bloody wars to bring it about. They have been concerned over the physical evils that oppress mankind, though not always sure whether to view them as God's punishments or Satan's attacks; in any case the relief of physical suffering has always been a major concern. Their hope has been to press back the demonic forces at every point—physical, moral, and spiritual—and to expand the domain of God to every phase of life and if possible to the ends of the earth.

Though among these four religions Zoroastrianism may seem to have estimated the magnitude of evil as greatest, it is Christianity that has taken the problem most to heart. It has incorporated the evil of man's rebellion and cosmic dislocations into the fabric of its faith and the essence of its theology; for it, evil is a permanent tragedy, not only in the order of creation, but perhaps even in the being of God. Certain it is that God is deeply affected by it, not merely by His anger at sin, but by affliction with the world's suffering. The suffering of Christ on the cross is God suffering the pains of His own creation. So serious is the problem of evil, that only by His own suffering in the being of His Eternal Son can its hold over man and creation be broken. God is the suffering Redeemer of mankind and the world, as well as its rejoicing Creator.

What, then, will be the end of the matter? Will evil finally be conquered? Unequivocally yes, say all these faiths; God and good men will win in the end over Satan and evil men; the evil of the earth—its sin, disease, death, and frustration—will be swallowed by the goodness of the Messianic Age, the Reign of Light, the Kingdom of God come on earth. There will be a final Judgment Day in which evil and evil men will be brought to a full reckoning and forever cast down, while goodness and good men will eternally triumph. History is not going on forever in a self-repeating circle, but moves to one climactic, "far-off divine event"; and from then on the will of God shall be done perfectly everywhere in the universe.

Not only is world history not going on aimlessly and forever but it may very soon come to an end. Many times the faithful of these religions have considered themselves to be living in the last days. Zoroaster believed that he was living in the end of the third world age of conflict, which would soon be past. The "latter days" of universal peace and prosperity under the Messiah did not seem too far off to the eyes of the Hebrew prophets—perhaps just around the corners of two or three more historical turnings. Their successors, the dramatic and visionary apocalyptists of Daniel's variety, expected that glorious time around the very *next* corner; indeed, until comparatively recent times those calling themselves Messiahs have appeared in the Jewish community in almost every century. So also has the Christian looked with eager eyes for the Second Coming of Christ. St. Paul expected it in his lifetime; and so have a multitude



of Christians in every generation, even down to the present-day Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists. And though Islam has no such expected second coming of Mohammed to look forward to, every good Moslem stands in constant readiness for the day in which Allah will roll up the world like a scroll and bring men into His presence for judgment.

3. *The Confucian Explanation: There Is no Cosmic Principle of Evil. (Though heaven enforces certain general principles of right and wrong, man must interpret these by his own intelligence and experience. He may hope thus to overcome the evils that plague him and ameliorate the sufferings that afflict him, one by one.)*

Confucianism had no philosophy of evil, because it did not take evil in the same serious way that both the Semite and Indian took it. There were, to be sure, opposing principles in the creation and constitution of the world, Yang and Yin; and human life is affected by them. Popular Chinese religion made much of *kwei* or Yin-principle spirits, which caused men all sorts of illness and difficulties; so also one may describe evil men as being more Yin than Yang. Yet one cannot say that there is evil in the sense of a malevolent principle in the world, or a supreme evil being over against Heaven. In fact, the Yin principle, as we have seen, is necessary to the creation of the world, and is an integral part of its dynamic processes.

Neither is there anything of the deep-dyed pessimism of India in the Confucian view of the creative process; the Confucian simply cannot be conceived as thinking that perhaps all earthly existence is a mistake, and that the only finally satisfactory solution is a return to undifferentiated unity; or that one ought, as rapidly as possible, to escape his individuality. He held this world to be on the whole good, though with some drawbacks that must be dealt with practically. He was not in favor of abolishing this world, for he found in it much of beauty and worth; in fact, he was inclined to doubt that there *was* any other world worth mentioning. Nor, as we have also observed, was there any belief that man is intrinsically a sinner; on the contrary, Confucius and Confucians had great confidence in the goodness of human nature. Of course man has defects and limitations; after all, he is only a man. But his fundamental quality is good; and it may be made better by proper education that will enable him to tackle his problems one by one. A modern Chinese philosopher, Lin, Yu-t'ang, has thus expressed it:

The finest philosophic perception of Confucius, it seems to me, is his recognition that "the measure of man is man." If it were not so, the whole system of Confucian ethics would fall to pieces, and would immediately become impracticable. The whole philosophy of ritual and music is but to "set the human heart right," and the king-

dom of God is truly within the man himself. The problem for any man intending to cultivate his personal life is merely to start out on a hunt for the best in his human nature and steadfastly keep to it. . . .

The most important ideas in Mencius [an interpreter of Confucius] are, the goodness of human nature, consequently the importance of recovering that original good nature, the recognition that culture or education merely consists in preventing the good nature in us from becoming "beclouded" by circumstances . . . and finally the declaration that all men are equal in their inherent goodness.<sup>4</sup>

And of course the final hope of the Confucianist was not for a New Jerusalem that should descend ready-made from heaven upon earth, a golden age that should suddenly come with the appearance of a Messiah, or a judgment day in which all rights and wrongs should be finally added up in a conclusive reckoning, and recompense be made for each. Evils (spelled with a small *e*), not one huge antagonistic evil mass or being, will probably be with us as long as the earth and humanity continue to exist. Each must be dealt with practically according to the best means possible and with the hope of somewhat bettering society in one's own lifetime. This is the summit of the Confucian hope: the construction of the better society and the better life in each generation, even if the *perfect* specimen of each seems to be unknown or beyond attainment.

#### 4. *A Comparison of Strengths and Weaknesses*

We have now before us the three major religious ways in which mankind has dealt with evil. One is the Indian, which takes it to be inherent in the very nature of human existence, and to be dealt with only by withdrawal to the inner world of mystical detachment from life. A second is the Semitic, which thinks of evil as a personal force or deliberate moral opposition that must be strenuously fought at every turn in the hope of final victory. And the third is the Confucian matter-of-fact appraisal of evil as no more than the unsatisfactory mental and physical conditions under which mankind strives, which must be dealt with as we are able, and with the maximum hope of at least some tangible betterment. What are their strengths and weaknesses?

##### a. *Hindu-Buddhist Passivism*

Hinduism and Buddhism have on the one hand a major weakness that pervades their philosophy of evil; and on the other hand they have a major spiritual truth to teach all mankind. The weakness is the negativism with which they encounter evil—that negativism that results from their fundamentally pessimistic view of life in this world. We have seen it invading their thought at every point, and here see them reap the final reward. In a world that is at most

<sup>4</sup> *The Wisdom of Confucius*, Random House, 1943, pp. 14, 251.



only a very inferior species of reality, a fundamentally illusory day-dream (Maya), why should one be greatly concerned about anything but escape from its unreality? Individuals are transient compounds of elements, too worthless to hate or love ardently; their mortal ills, along with their personal individuality, belong to this unreal world of Maya; hence none of them—individuals or their ills—is worthy of any extreme emotional disturbance. Or else, as the product of justified Karma penalty, the ills are not to be interfered with. So it is that Buddhist and Hindu cultures have lived on for centuries in the midst of poverty, disease, and social discrimination by the caste system, but have never felt it their duty to raise a finger to alleviate such conditions in any major way. Evil has been something to be transcended but not opposed, a passing distinction that roots not in reality but in mortal mind. Their pessimistic disillusion with the world has permeated everything they have done, and paralyzed any concerted movement toward an active struggle against human ills, even of the most obvious sort.

On the other hand, they have something of spiritual wisdom to teach the West: it is the value of a certain detachment from and disinterest in the goals of this world. They have a special theoretical foundation for it, of course, in the teaching of reincarnation; one who looks forward to many more possible rebirths has many centuries at his disposal, which seem to be lacking to modern Western man. Yet the mature spiritual life has always within it something of this disenchantment or partial disillusion with the purely physical life and world as such. The world of flesh is not the ultimately important one; outwardly impressive events are not of the first magnitude; the goals most men seek in their business, science, politics, and social life are not worthy of the *total* service of the human spirit. There are inward reaches of spiritual growth and realization, far more important, and which a man who gives his wholeness to outward things will never experience. Those who set all their hope on the achievement of a goal within the order of human history, and then fail, have nothing left; they are empty shells burned out by strenuous activity—not living men. At least a part—and perhaps the most certain part—of man's destiny is to be found in the realization of the fullness of his own personal spiritual qualities.

#### b. *Confucian-Humanist Optimism*

At the opposite pole stands Confucianism and its modern equivalent, scientific humanism. Historic Confucianism itself became so tradition-bound that it stultified Chinese civilization by imposing on it a rigidly inflexible system of manners, morals, and government; but the generally humanistic quality of Confucian teaching may justify us in the following modernized interpretation.

Here we find a common-sense, this-worldly, eminently practical way of deal-

ing with human ills. What is human ill? It is no mysterious affliction by malignant spirits or unhappy yearning to be one with Oneness; it is whatever seems to interfere with the maximum satisfaction of man's desires and needs. Obviously there are some limitations as to what man can be expected to achieve. He probably can never fly under his own power—but he can build aeroplanes and perhaps space ships. He may not live forever, but perhaps he can live in greater physical comfort than he has in ages past, and the span of his life be lengthened. He may not be able to fulfill his every desire, because of the conflicting desires of others and because of his own inherent limitations; yet he may achieve increasing opportunity to develop to their utmost capacity his physical and mental powers. Whatever hinders his development—pain, poverty, disease, war, physical or intellectual tyranny, or emotional fear—is evil, and should be fought with every resource at man's command. What aids him to achieve better health, integrate his personality, take part intelligently in his society, and live creatively, is good, and should be forwarded with every scientific resource known to man.

Such an approach has the advantages of optimism and flexibility. Man is encouraged to look to his own resources rather than waiting for Someone to save him or to bring in the world of righteousness by a Second Coming. He is also encouraged to believe that the problems of the world are such that he *can* deal with them directly and effectively. Thus he does not spend his vital energies in struggling with his guilt as a sinner, praying to a God to rescue him, or slackly depending on Him rather than himself, or shuddering in fear before the diabolical. He can give the maximum of effort and intelligence to the political, social, moral, and scientific problems that, still unresolved, confront mankind. Here is a statement by a modern humanist that expresses genuine hope for the improvement of the human lot by a resolute devotion to the best man knows:

No; accept the stern condition of being psychically alone in all the reach of space and time, that we may then, with new zest, enter the warm valley of earthly existence—warm with human impulse, aspiration, and affection, warm with the unconquerable thing called life; turn from the recognition of our cosmic isolation to a new sense of human togetherness, and so discover in a growing human solidarity, in a progressively ennobled humanity, in an increasing joy in living, the goal we have all along blindly sought, and build on earth the fair city we have looked for in a compensatory world beyond.<sup>5</sup>

We have noted the limitations such a viewpoint places on the perspectives under which man lives, and there inquired whether he would be satisfied to take his eyes off the far horizons and turn exclusively to grubbing away at the

<sup>5</sup> Max C. Otto, *Science and the Moral Life*, Mentor Books, No. M 43, p. 138.



tasks immediately in front of him; here we may notice other limitations of the same general nature. The optimism of this view, for instance, seems a fraction too eager and brash, its confidence in human nature too thoroughgoing. It looks forward to a golden age of man, brought to pass by increasing technological knowledge; and it believes that there is nothing wrong with man or society which more knowledge will not cure. There are disturbing signs that increased knowledge does not always bring with it increased moral stature and self-control, however. There is even reason to believe that there is a radically evil bent in mankind that can and does take the form of deliberate use of technical knowledge for the systematic regimentation and exploitation of men. And what reason is there to hope that a "soft" humanism may not turn into the "hard" militant variety?

There are, secondly, some ethical difficulties that result. Humanism has said, "The devil must go. No longer will we think of evil as an opaque essence, but only of manageable quantitative evils." And this has seemed to be to the good. Yet along with the destruction of the devil has gone the banishment of God. (Whether this is a strict necessity is another question; but in humanism it seems to be the case.) Putting aside the question as to whether man is better off for morale's sake, minus *both* devil and God, we may note that this leaves mankind's moral standards in an orphaned condition; his ethical ideals are his own variant ideas, without parentage or standing in the universe. Thus a modern humanist:

Nature, issuing her last warning, may bid us embrace some new illusion before it is too late, and accord ourselves once more with her. But we prefer rather to fail in our own way than to succeed in hers. Our human world may have no existence outside our own desires, but those are more imperious than anything else we know, and we will cling to our lost cause, choosing always rather to know than to be. . . . Ours is a lost cause and there is no place for us in the natural universe, but we are not, for all that, sorry to be human. We should die as men rather than live as animals.<sup>6</sup>

Now what happens when man's values, his standards of right and wrong, are held to root in nothing but his own ideas? to be his own creations, with no genuine relation to reality? He is separated and alienated from the universe in which he dwells. In so far as he becomes human—that is, in so far as he becomes capable of creating ideal structures of goodness and worth, which in turn he seeks to achieve in concrete form—he is utterly alone, or perhaps even working against the universal order of reality. He must perhaps *oppose* it to achieve that very goodness which he values most. And, still further, he is left without an objective standard for what he conceives to be good and evil, right and wrong.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph W. Krutch, *The Modern Temper*, Harcourt, Brace, 1929, p. 249.

If one says that the essence of goodness is just being naturally human, then we have to ask, "What is man?" And if man is only man (so humanism), a creature of Nature and nothing more, what other rule does he have for his guidance but the insuring of his own convenience and comfort? How will rightness differ from what is useful or physically efficient? Why should one be bound by anything but considerations affecting his own personal—and to some extent social—welfare? Why should a moral standard bind him to itself, if it is only a social custom of supposed social worth, or only his own artistic and fanciful creation?

Obviously a religious man will not be satisfied by such a reading of the problem of good and evil; for the religious man uniformly conceives the standard of rightness he follows to have some anchorage in the universe of which he is a part. The goodness he seeks is not antihuman, but neither is it merely human. He regards it, not as his own creation, but as an insight into a greater Goodness at the heart of reality. The values he cherishes are cherished in part because they represent a value greater than his own, to which he hopes to attain. He believes that he discovers in God the hope of perfection for himself and his society; such perfection, he believes, is not merely his own poetic fancy as to what might be, but is a true vision of what actually exists, fully in God and to some extent in the world. God is the existent world, *plus* the hope that man's dearest values may be increasingly and lastingly realized within it.

### c. *Jewish-Christian Dualism*

Does such a philosophy of evil as we find in the Semitic pattern of thinking remedy the deficiencies of the above views without creating greater difficulties of its own? This will be our question for the remainder of the chapter. And to begin with we may say that it does remedy some of the deficiencies. It does not partake of the pervasive negativism that is the curse of Hinduism and Buddhism; or probably we should in all accuracy say that some forms of this pattern of thinking have led to the avoidance of that negativism, or that in general it more naturally and easily avoids it. Islam has not been too conspicuously successful in turning its religious struggle against evil into a socially productive form, but has lived side by side with poverty, disease, and ignorance in much the same way as have the Oriental faiths. Whether such conditions are entirely the product of the given religion, or also in great part the result of nonreligious factors, may be debated.

Judaism and Christianity, on the other hand, would seem to have realized to a considerable degree the active potentiality of their doctrine of evil. Each has experienced—and sometimes for a time yielded—to the temptation to flee the world because it was considered to belong primarily to the devil. Christianity had its monasticism and Judaism its partly self-imposed ghettos. When Mes-



sianic and Second Coming expectations have been in the forefront of their thinking, each has expected God to solve all human problems without much human effort. But in each the conviction that evil was a force to be fought, and that in God was the hope of overcoming it—to a considerable extent even on this earth—has led to a positive participation in the life of the world; the Semitic conviction that the world is *worth* saving has led to an effort to save it from its evil. Modern humanism, whether it is aware of the fact or not, has inherited much of its active hopefulness from the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The form taken by this hopeful effort to save the world has been highly ethical and vigorously intellectual. Very naturally—even inevitably—a religion that believes that goodness is a Personal Existence and evil an opposing personal will, or wills, sets itself to vigorous moral action for the sake of goodness. There are of course distortions that have resulted from some expressions of this moralism, which we shall note later; but here we may emphasize the positive quality of convinced moral witness that has been characteristic of the Judeo-Christian viewpoint, and to some extent of Islam and Zoroastrianism. Here is a vigorous attempt to achieve the moralization of human life; here is a strong ethical witness uniformly lacking or of minor consequence in the Oriental faiths. The good life here is a moral life; and its exponents have been prophet and reformer who have sought to make goodness effective in this world, not mystics who have turned away from the world.

A considerable degree of intellectual vigor has likewise resulted, some of it no doubt wasted and misdirected, yet productive of genuine advance. India, of course, has been marvelously productive in intellectual matters; but the pervasive pessimism that has turned her away from the world of sense experience to the inner world, has also led away from the exploration and development of that outer one. Confucianism *might* have followed the road of such exploration, had it not become attached to the past; but the West in particular, with its more optimistic view of reality inherited from Greek philosophy and Judeo-Christian religion, has sought to deal vigorously with the outer world in intellectual terms.

Thus science arose, opposed many times by the official religious organization, yet finding the general cultural atmosphere produced by the Christian faith favorable to its effort. For this faith teaches that God manifests Himself in a real world that is therefore worthy of human interest and consideration; it is not a shadow-shape, intrinsically worthless. And its conception of God as an intelligent Creator and sustainer of the world order provides a basic faith in the essential unity and rationality of the world that has been, and still is, conducive to scientific investigation. Modern science was begun in the confidence that men would find the world intelligible because their researches would be but a discovering of those structural principles God's creative intelligence had

used in framing the world. Indeed, there are those who say, rightly or wrongly, that it *is* the cultural factor of this underlying Christian faith in God and His universe which accounts for the rise of science in the West rather than in the East, and who would further say that the scientific endeavor continues to be supported by essentially the same faith in the rational unity of all existence—though it no longer uses the name of God in this connection.

If the Christian tradition has been thus different from the Oriental tradition in its interpretation of the world, how does it compare in these respects with humanism? Obviously at many points it has much in common with humanism; in fact, as we have noted, the latter draws much of its emphasis and basic moral inspiration from the Judeo-Christian tradition. In its active constructive social efforts, its concern with all conditions that affect man, its alleviation of human ills, and its persistent hope for a Messianic age or Kingdom of God on earth, the Judeo-Christian faith has been strongly humanistic. The basic difference is to be found in the other-worldly, transcendent reference this faith insists on in all its thinking and acting—which humanism rejects. Christianity, indeed, would insist that its humanism is based on a *superhumanism*, the spiritual kinship of man to God and the ethical demands of God upon man, for the foundation of all its values and as the motivation for all its effort. It would further insist that man's best hope and final guarantee of success in the human enterprise is to be found, not in his own unaided efforts, but in the support that the universe (God) gives man's best endeavors.

It is precisely at the points where humanism is limited that the Judeo-Christian faith makes its greatest appeal. It adds wider scope to the narrow humanistic perspective in its conviction of God's reality. It gives solidity and objectivity to man's moral standards, by rooting them in the essential order of the universe. It denies that man is alienated from the universe at the peak of his ideal accomplishments (idealistic man versus the factual universe revealed by science), but insists that *here* is precisely where he is most at one with it. In other words: *spiritual, moral man is a child of the universe just as truly as biological man.* His spiritual quality is as strong evidence for the innate spirituality of that universe, as his physical nature is of his unity with its physical forces. It substantiates man's hope that his ideals may be realized by the help of a power greater than himself that makes for righteousness in this same universe.

But are there no difficulties here? There are at least three. One is that the Judeo-Christian tradition has tended to tie itself shortsightedly to the immediate realization of its final goal, the Kingdom of Heaven, and to believe that it will be achieved in terms of some specific plan, measure, or program. In this context it has often put a fanatic energy into some short-term cause or activity, without touching the long-range social evils with which a less intensive,



less absolute devotion to the imminent realization of perfection might have been able to deal. William Miller, the founder of Christian Adventism in America, who believed that Christ would come again in 1843 to set the world once and for all at rights, and persuaded many thousands of church people to wait for such a day, is a case in point. Or, again, we might point to those who believed that the abolition of slavery or the enactment of the Prohibition Amendment would bring the millennium to earth, and worked with fierce, single-minded energy for the success of their chosen reforms.

Therefore Christianity and Judaism have often been characterized by programs of social reform, accompanied by the reformer's intolerance, which have sought to force all men into the Kingdom willy-nilly. The world should and must be made over at once; the total success of God's plans waits on human efforts. This is the reverse and unlovely side of their moral enthusiasm which a humanism that was not aiming so high might have avoided.

There is secondly the question as to whether Judaism and Christianity have not taken the problem of evil too seriously; or better, have they taken it too seriously in the wrong way? Does the conception of a supremely evil personage, the devil, add anything to the solution except a feeling of heroism on the part of the human warrior? Undoubtedly it does give a sense of reality to those who fight against the powers of darkness that is lacking among those who find evil unreal or to consist only of the inconveniences inherent in the human situation; yet it may provide only a hypodermic-needle kind of courage against an imaginary opponent.

Actually the doctrine of a devil and his hell carries less and less conviction in Christian circles—though it is here that it has achieved its fullest-blown form. Some of this lessening of conviction is due to a polite looking the other way in theological discourse; attention has been fastened on God and heaven. Some of it has resulted from a well-bred desire to achieve a mannerly sophistication in religion that would permit its entrance into high society by refining away its crudities. There has also been outraged moral denial on the part of Universalism and Unitarianism. Yet the basic difficulty is that the concept of a supremely Evil Power has not seemed to accord fundamentally with either the doctrine of one supreme God or with the facts of the world as we observe them; particularly is this true in the light of the scientifically buttressed conviction that nature is a systematic uniformity, in which even storms and plagues happen not by diabolical agency, but according to natural laws.

A double problem faces Christianity here: it must continue to give witness to the depth of evil, but without creating a devil to account for it. Undoubtedly its conviction that there is a depth of evil in human life that is overlooked by blandly optimistic humanism and by-passed by nonmoral orientalism, is a valu-

able and true insight. Our recent psychological studies indicate the presence of a depth factor in human personality that is not all sweetness and light; for example, subconscious motivations. There is also a deliberate setting of the will against goodness even in the face of increasing knowledge, which takes "demonic" form in human life; witness the coldly calculated mass brutalities of our generation. Can religion recognize this without insisting on a supreme diabolism?

The second problem is in the conception of the final destiny of the morally evil person. The idea of a hell seems less and less convincing to the world today; particularly is it hard to divide humanity, on the basis of our knowledge of men, into the absolutely good and the absolutely bad; few merit either designation. Yet Christianity is undoubtedly right in insisting that any future existence must have moral continuity with this one. One person is simply not the same in character or spiritual capacity as another, even in God's sight—or perhaps *especially* in His sight. For instance, could a St. Francis and a Cesare Borgia be happy together? How, then, shall it conceive of the triumph of goodness and the overthrow of evil in the individual soul, without making it as absolute as heaven and hell? or make its concept of the next life accord with the moral realities of this one, without dividing human spirits from each other in black and white fashion?

Finally, we may say that Christian theorizing about the doctrine of evil has blunted the edge of the problem but not removed it. We may explain many evils in the world—the moral and social evils, for example—as necessary products of man's freedom: evil chosen rather than good, but necessary if we are to have the reality of goodness. This kind of evil may be seen as the result of men's deliberate choice of the wrong things. But there is the problem of "excess" evil, or what Professor Brightman calls "surd evil" after the analogy of a mathematical surd—that is, "an evil that is not reducible to good, no matter what operations are performed on it."<sup>7</sup>

This would seem to apply to the cruel destructiveness of the natural world, the malevolence of its disease germs, the fierceness of the tiger, the sharpness of pain, or the generally ruthless destruction of the individual by nature. And sometimes mass social evils, such as vast programs of discrimination and persecution, and technological warfare, reach such proportions of destructiveness and utter evil as they crush, maim, pervert, and kill human beings, innocent and guilty alike, that any small incidental benefits from them are utterly blotted out by their unspeakable evil. How can such things be, if there is indeed a good God in control of things? This is the perennial problem of theistic faiths that even

<sup>7</sup> Edgar S. Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion*, Prentice-Hall, 1949, p. 538.



the removal of Satan from the scene will not solve—may even, in fact, make more difficult. For with Satan gone how can such evil be accounted for, apart from a fatal weakness in God?

Some of the ways in which Christian thinkers have sought to turn the edge of this problem have been suggested. It is often pointed out that many "evils" turn ultimately into good, or can be used to produce good, even though they are unpleasant. Thus, disappointments, if handled rightly, may produce moral character; our own suffering may produce sympathy for others who likewise suffer, and induce us to work the harder for the relief of the world's suffering; the frustrations we normally meet with in life may turn us away from a crassly materialistic approach to life, to an emphasis on personal relations and spiritual goods. Such "solutions" affect only a part of our suffering, however; for the great mass suffering sometimes inflicted by nature or human society often crushes a man completely, without any opportunity for its transmutation into good. Another and perhaps more fundamental suggestion is that the order of reality is such that everything must have its price, so to speak; along with the good must come the evil. We have already noted that genuine moral character and goodness cannot be achieved without some degree of freedom to do evil. We might note also that in the natural world one cannot achieve sensitivity without the possibility of experiencing both pain and pleasure; or that one cannot have life structures, or be capable of ordered thought and action, except in a uniform natural order where there is the constant force of gravity, where fire is always hot, where the sun always rises, where oxygen is always oxygen, and where atomic energy is always capable of exploding. Yet these uniformities that make life possible also limit it, and may under certain conditions bring suffering or death to those involved in them.

Such considerations may perhaps take some of the deepest darkness from the prospect of evil, but they do not entirely solve the problem from the religious or moral point of view; something of irrationality or the surd quality still remains. And to deal with this remaining problem, some philosophers and theologians, unsatisfied with the orthodox approach, have brought forth alternative suggestions. One of these is the idea of a finite or limited God, which has found expression recently in a number of writers, such as William James, the American pragmatist philosopher; H. G. Wells, the English novelist, essayist, and science-fiction author; and in Edgar Brightman, American philosopher of religion, already referred to. According to this school of thinkers God may be said to be all-good but not almighty. He has an element in His own nature, the "Given," which He cannot control—to use Brightman's phrase; it is the quality of the material with which He has to work, so to speak, that limits Him; against this recalcitrant element He wars continually. Thus the fight of God

against evil is real; the human moral struggle is genuine. Yet this evil does not have the proportions of a devil; and the final outcome is held to be the prevalence of good—though the reasons for such a hopeful faith, and the degree of that prevalence, remain obscure.

Another approach, stemming from a variety of sources, most of them philosophical and scientific rather than theological, has been to appraise hopefully the evolution of life on this planet in terms of a general upward progression. Among such writers might be included Lloyd Morgan, Edmund Noble, Henri Bergson, and Lecomte du Noüy, who have spoken of "emergent," "purposive," or "creative" evolution; or who, like S. Alexander and Alfred N. Whitehead, have spoken of God as being in some sense an emerging or developing quality or being in the universe. The development of life in the universe shows an increase of perceptiveness, sensitivity, and general moral and spiritual capacity, especially on the earth with its human population. Thus we might say (Alexander) that God is a *nisus toward perfection*, a force that reaches out progressively toward higher attainments in the realm of consciousness, moral character, and personal qualities. He is the God Who is coming-to-be, *the consequent God* (Whitehead), Who is increasing in strength, goodness, and definite characteristics as the natural process rises to new heights. Some of the vestigial remnants from past and lower stages persist; some experiments or efforts on the part of this Power to achieve perfection have failed; hence the evil and maladjustment.

Such compromises will probably never satisfy the main stream of Christian thinkers. Is Brightman's "Given" preferable to the devil? is it like an increasing cancer in God's being, or will it be overcome in the end? Just how limited is God's power? And of the latter group of thinkers we might ask: "If God and the evolutionary process are one, how then can we reverence Him? How can He stand above it in moral judgment; is He any more than the sum of human intelligence? Has he reached any higher peak of goodness than humanity's highest?"

For those who reject such solutions the problem of evil will always create a tension at the heart of their faith. Perhaps the best that can be said is that there is some form of necessity that applies to God, in that He could not create a world of goodness apart from evil, of intelligence or truth without the possibility of error, of sensitivity to beauty without an accompanying sensitivity to pain and ugliness, of a stable natural order without the mechanical ruthlessness that goes with it. There is this to be said in favor of such a view: it provides man with the hope of a successful struggle against evil without blinking the seriousness of the facts, demands of him a high standard of goodness he may not evade, and offers him the resource of an enduring trust in God when his own private battle against evil seems to be a losing proposition.



## Chapter XXIX

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### RELIGIONS AND RELIGION IN THE MODERN WORLD

We have now reached the end of our long survey and interpretation of the religions of the world. Our materials have by no means been exhausted; indeed, we have only scratched the surface; or, to change the figure, opened a few doors to the further study of any one or all of the religions on whose history and teachings we have touched. Such being our situation in this final chapter, our purpose is not to recount the way we have taken or attempt to survey what there might be yet to do, but to point out some questions that have been raised by our study, and note some others we face in our modern thought about religion and religions.

#### 1. *Religions and Religion*

At the very opening of our discussion we considered in what way religion was one (religion) and in what sense it was many (religions); and in a real sense this has been both the subject matter and problem of all our thinking since. We have been observing and evaluating the ways in which religions have been both the same and different in their social patterns, in their plans of salvation, and in their questions and answers. But after our consideration of all the unities and varieties of religion, a further question remains: can we in any sense compare one religion with another in the hope of evaluating one as better, truer, or more adequate than another?

This is a question we cannot avoid in the long run; but it is a difficult one, and subject to many possible perversions. Particularly is it difficult for a person of one religious faith to evaluate the faith of another, for he will tend to idealize his own and look with critical eyes at the other; this happens even between sects within the same general tradition. Nor, as we observed, can the person who stands outside all religions avoid the difficulties of *his* position; for his very hope of completely impartial objectivity often makes him unaware of the inner nature of the faiths he discusses, and prevents him from exercising sympathetic appreciation of them.

Apparently the simplest way—and a very popular one—is to say: “Religions cannot be compared except with the ulterior motive of trying to convert someone to your particular brand; for it makes no more sense to try to compare one man’s religion with another’s than to compare one variety of taste in foods with another.” Suppose one man eats rice with curry powder, another shark-fin soup, another plantains and bread fruit, another frozen raw fish, and still another fried chicken and mashed potatoes. Can we compare them, except to say that I, who live in the United States, prefer the last, while other peoples prefer some of the other combinations? Obviously it is a matter of conditioned taste. And equally truly, perhaps, each particular diet is best fitted to the living conditions of the locality where it is followed. Eskimos ate a diet of meat for centuries and remained in good health; but the white man’s flour and sugar have brought them all kinds of bodily ills.

So would many people say about religion. The most that one can do is to describe the facts of the differing religious faiths, to note that Religion A does it this way, Religion B that way, and Religion C still another. But beyond this we cannot go—at least not with any meaning. Observe how impossible it is for people to discuss religion dispassionately; how they “emote” about it rather than think about it; how discussions of faith by differing religionists only end in each one stubbornly sticking by his own opinion the more. Let us live in tolerance of each other’s religious faith, just as we live with each other’s foibles of dress, manners, food habits, and eccentricities of all sorts. No doubt each person’s (or people’s) religion is best suited to him and his circumstances. Words like “good,” “true” have no real meaning here, except to say: it is “good” for him, or it is “true” for him, but not for me.

However attractively easy such a solution seems, it is actually no solution at all. Several important facts are forgotten. One is that religions are not hermetically sealed compartments, from each of which it is impossible to pass to another or to make connections of any sort with the outside world. Despite the apparent uselessness of arguing about religion or comparing religious values, it is continually being done. Religions of all kinds present their claims publicly by service of worship, by sermon or discourse, by book, pamphlet, and radio. Obviously the purpose of all this is to confirm the faithful in the faith, as against other ways of thinking and acting, and also to win new converts either from irreligion or from another religious faith. Nor is all this without effect. People *do* change from one religious faith to another, as the history of any of the major religions like Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam abundantly testifies. Each of these faiths began with one founder and his small circle of disciples; the millions of converts who have been gained since were nearly all originally of some other religious persuasion.



And so also do religions deeply affect each other; we have seen this at numerous points. Japan tried a combination of Shinto and Buddhism; the Buddhism that passed through China to Japan was modified by the Chinese pattern of thought and life till it is scarcely comparable to the original Indian Buddhism. Later Hinduism was importantly modified by the Buddhist heresy. Judaism provided the basic moral and theological pattern for Christianity; from both of them came much of Islam; all three were influenced by Zoroastrianism; and all three of them have mutually influenced each other since. Christianity took over European culture, but took over many pagan holidays and usages. Such a catalogue might be continued indefinitely and in great detail: thoughts, institutions, and rituals have interpenetrated each so continually that no religion is ever a "pure" religion, but each has in it the elements of several others.

Indeed, whether we wish to or not, we are continually *forced* to compare religions with each other in a world that contains many varieties. They themselves invite us to do so by their claims and counterclaims to truth and value. Even in the minds of those who profess to make no such comparisons they are nevertheless being made. For instance, what person living in 20th century "civilized" society—without trying to define just what we mean by "civilized"—would find it possible to accept seriously the religion of the Australian bushmen or the primitive African tribesman, no matter how tolerant he may be? The very use of the word "primitive"—or an alternate expression "non-literate"—indicates that we consider ourselves to have passed beyond the range of their ideas. As sociologists or anthropologists we may study their culture and religion seriously and sympathetically—but always with detachment, never as prospective converts. We may not feel called on to convert them to our faith—or lack of it—but neither do we seriously contemplate conversion to theirs. We are saying (by implication at least) that we cannot believe their religious ideas to be true or consider them adequate or valuable for us.

It has indeed become increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to avoid making such comparisons between religions. As has been pointed out almost *ad nauseam*, we live in a shrinking world; diverse cultures and religions are being thrown together increasingly; travel, exchange educational opportunities, commercial activities, and political interests bring Jew, Christian, Hindu, Moslem, Shintoist, Buddhist, Communist, and men of no professed faith together in all sorts of relationships. And one may add to this that the world today, especially the West, has a greater knowledge of the other religions and cultures than it has ever had before, as the result of recent studies in anthropology, culture, history, literature, and religion; the last seventy-five years have seen the "discovery" of Eastern religions by the West, so to speak. Thus the materials for comparative judgments are at hand in abundance, whether we use them or not.

Nor is there anything wrong in making such evaluative comparisons, provided we do not deny to another his right to state his religious claims, to follow his way of life, nor seek to coerce him by physical or economic pressures into a different way of religious thinking. Such comparisons are, in fact, both inevitable and desirable. When one says that all religions are equally true or good or valuable, he is passing on them a most drastic kind of evaluative judgment; though he seldom realizes it, he is saying—in the same breath with which he declares their equal truth—that all religions are equally false, evil, or worthless; the two statements cannot be separated. For if religions are of such a nature that no distinctions of truth or falsehood, goodness or badness, value or worthlessness can really be made among them, then religion is such a trivial thing as not to matter, or of such an unreality that it cannot be discussed with any meaning. In other words, the things with which religions concern themselves are either totally false, having to do with no reality at all, or else out on the fanciful edge along with fairy tales whose truth or falsity does not really matter. Only in terms of religion's total irrelevance and absolute intellectual nonsense can we say that there is neither better nor worse in religion.

But, even if we grant that judgments of some sort are necessary in religious matters, to have given ourselves permission to make them does not of itself produce such judgments—especially not good ones that avoid the pitfalls of prejudice and wishful thinking. If we are to be at all fair, and to hope for some measure of truth in our judgments among religions, we must observe some basic principles. One is that we must take care to consider each religion in terms of its setting and background before we estimate it. Particularly is this true of faiths that stand far apart from us in the cultural scale. It is very easy, for instance, to consider all primitive religions as sheer foolishness or nonsense, with a “now-we-know-better” smirk on our faces. To be sure, we can no longer accept the primitive circle of ideas or practices for ourselves; and we may believe that in the long run the primitive will be better off in every way if he can finally be led to truer ideas about the kind of world in which he lives—a belief in scientific natural law rather than the rule of nature by spirits, for instance. Yet this need not lead to the judgment that his religion is illogical foolishness; given his background, his ideas no doubt make as much sense to him as ours to us.

The same might be said about the moral level of religions of different historical patterns. One should not be surprised to find a lower level moral standard in the book of Judges in the Old Testament than he finds in the Sermon on the Mount in the New, or in modern Judaism. Again it may be that we wish for ourselves no part of the bloodthirsty, polygamous culture of former days. We may rightly value modern religious morality as better than the older



variety; but we should not indulge in strenuous castigation of the older variety as immoral and vicious. Of course, if we should seek to perpetuate it today, that might be a proper way to describe it; but in its own day early Hebrew religion sought to achieve the best moral life possible. And with all its limitations we should value it for what it was when compared to its contemporaries in the religious field—not as valued by our standards today. The same general rule could be applied to many other contexts.

This leads us to make a second point: we must judge religions partly by what they *intend* to say, or intend by the symbols they use, rather than by the literal statements of their doctrines; that is, we must understand what a religion is driving at in its practices and statements, and compare it with what serves the same function in another religion, rather than with what seems to be literally the same. An example or two may make our meaning clear. Early Buddhism professed to believe in no gods and no soul; on the surface one could say, then, that it was no religion; yet practically it functioned as a religion. The prospect of Nirvana is similar in operation to the hope of paradise in other faiths; it is an ultimate salvation from evil. Or, to put it differently, Karma functioned as the God-reality does elsewhere in religion; it represented a power or range of reality by whose nature and workings man achieved his salvation according to his personal merits. And though Buddhism recognized no soul, its seekers after salvation performed roughly the same kind of moral and spiritual self-disciplines that the would-be saints of a half-dozen other faiths have imposed on themselves in the name of purifying their souls. And so we might go on with regard to varying ideas of the divine; from mana on to an omnipotent God, from sacrificial rites to the Roman Catholic Eucharist, from Jewish circumcision to Christian baptism, to point out the functional similarity or identity of doctrines and practices that on the surface are greatly different from each other. In other words, we must allow religions considerable variety in the terms various of them use to state the same essential truth, or allow for the divergent manners in which they express the same essential ritual significance; the fundamental meaning or intention must be recognized for what it is, both in its crude and developed forms.

We must make allowance for still another factor here: that religious practice often differs sharply from religious doctrine, or that the true inner significance of a religion escapes the outside observer; particularly is this true when one religionist judges a rival faith. So it is that to the Catholic, Protestantism is a jungle of conflicting, contradictory sects and libertarian practices; while to the Protestant, Catholicism is an iron-handed authoritarianism and a religion of fear. Neither of these pictures is in true proportion, for Protestant doctrine and practice are much more unified than the Catholic suspects, and there are much

greater depths of love and devotion within Catholicism than Protestants give it credit for. Or, again, there is the Christian picture of Islam as a ruthlessly militant religion able to make converts only at the point of the sword. What is forgotten is that there are a considerable number of instances in which Christianity sought by like forcible means both to make and keep converts to the faith, and that Islam has perpetuated and spread itself widely in recent centuries through the voluntary missionary efforts of travelers, merchants, colonists, and traders, far more than by the sword.

Let us attack our problem, then, with the greatest degree of insight into the variations on the same theme that different religions produce, with due regard to different levels of culture, with sympathetic appreciation of differing faiths, and with recognition of the failures of all to live up to the highest claims of their teachings. Yet let us recognize also that when all possible tolerant allowances have been made, not all religions and religious doctrines are the same; for widely different things are said and done, all in the name of religion—things that must be clearly distinguished from each other if judgments of any sort are to be made about them. Even though with the Hindu we large-mindedly allow a considerable latitude of religious vocabulary, it may be questioned whether it is not possible to become *too* inclusive. If everything from the “lowest” to the “highest” in religion, from bloody sacrifice to spiritual dedication, sacred prostitution to celibacy, or God viewed as incarnate in an elephant up to and including the concept of Him as perfect beyond the highest range of human morality—if all this is legitimate religion, then how does any of it make either moral or intellectual sense? Even in the midst of religious variety some ideas must cast each other out, some practices be opposed to, and exclusive of, others, some standards be called better than their opposites.

If, then, we are to compare religions with each other—one’s own faith included—what standards shall we use? Are there common yardsticks by which we can measure the divergent faiths of the world, somewhat objectively and in fairness to all? This is no doubt an impossibility in the fully ideal sense, for the judges or “impartial” observers will be affected by their own viewpoint in the selection and application of the yardstick. Nor will the mystic in his trance, the devotionalist in his emotional worship, or the theologian surrounded by his doctrinal superstructure perhaps pay us much heed; each will be assured of the all-sufficiency of his own way. Yet the claims they make, and the courses of action to which they urge men, must necessarily be judged by those same men—one set of claims over against another. We may then suggest three more or less adequate criteria by which religions, as ways of life calling for men’s allegiance, may be judged.



a. *Bases of Comparison*

*The first of these would be an intellectual viewpoint or account coherent with our most assured knowledge of our environing reality.* And let us be clear as to what this means. It does not mean that religion must embrace in its orbit all the scientific knowledge of the physical world, or be concerned with every item of that knowledge. For the center of religious truth and concern is not in a complete description or explanation of the universe. Nor does it mean—as some religionists have mistakenly asserted—that the sacred books of the faith, in order to be religiously true or valuable, must be manuals of astronomy, geology, and psychology. Religious language and scientific language will never be the same. Neither does it mean that at every point religion must ask the permission of science to speak out its intuitions or convictions about reality.

What it does mean is that though religious truth has ranges that science as such does not and cannot deal with, religions *do* deal to an important extent with the same world of time and space reality, of physical and historical happenings, with which men deal in their other disciplines of thought. Therefore, though a religion has the right to speak forth its own intuitions, it cannot totally disregard the witness of other ranges of knowledge. If it makes statements about the course of history (as the prophet does), it is subject to historical judgment; if it speaks concerning the age of the earth and of man, as some would insist that the Jewish-Christian Bible does, then it must be judged by geological and astronomical science; if it speaks concerning the nature of man, it must at least compare notes with the anthropologist, the sociologist, and the psychologist; and if it speaks about the ultimate nature of the world, it must endure the criticism of the philosophical metaphysician. What it says on these subjects must not flatly contradict what is our best assured knowledge in those areas.

It is no doubt true that many people espouse religion for other than intellectual reasons—such as emotional or social satisfactions. Yet it is equally a fact that religions seek to appeal to men on the basis of their essential truthfulness. Men espouse them primarily because they have a conviction of their truth; the emotional satisfaction or excitement they experience in their faith is often taken to be a direct evidence of the truthfulness of a particular religious view, or else results in turn *from* such a conviction of truthfulness—or both at the same time. And when we lose confidence in this truth claim of religion we will in the end forsake the faith, first intellectually, then emotionally, and perhaps socially. Thus, if a religion is to speak to men it must persuade them that it is true in the light of the other knowledge they possess.

It will be this kind of thinking which must in the end decide such a main issue as that which lies between the religions of East and West, as to how we shall conceive of the nature of ultimate reality. Is that reality impersonal being

or substance, some kind of a moral-physical order, or is it directed by a personal will or purpose? Scientific data concerning the uniformity of nature undoubtedly throw strong doubts on the truth of any account that would speak too directly and simply of a personal spiritual agency behind each particular natural phenomenon. A crudely animistic account of the world that sees God or gods blowing in the winds or personally hurling a bolt of lightning to the earth must be ruled out. This of course does not settle the ultimate issue; for personal intelligence seems to be able, as we have observed, to use a mechanically regular order of events without disturbing its regularity. Yet any final statement must necessarily include these facts concerning physical uniformity which science has laid bare. The religion that holds our intellectual allegiance, however slight or great its intellectual structure may be, must be able somehow to include them in its scheme.

A second consideration forces itself upon us: *what personal and social values does this or that religion encourage?* This is without doubt a thorny question, because of the varying mores of the peoples of the earth. We might need to ask other leading questions—for example, to determine what personal and social values are truly desirable—before we could call one religion “better” or “worse” than another. Yet unless one takes the position that no one kind of society is better than any other, that any attitude one takes toward the worth of other persons is just as good or as bad as any other, or that life and death, health and disease, happiness and unhappiness, frustration or achievement, lying or truth-telling, stealing or working, and so forth, are of the same value, he might well be able—even be forced—to make some sort of pertinent judgment in this area.

Perhaps the key question to ask of any religion in this area would be: “*What is your estimation of man and his values?*” Now we have observed that all religions theoretically give man a supreme place in the created order; he is a son of the gods, or of the highest rank of created beings. But practically these apparently similar versions do not mean the same; the “man” we are dealing with appears to be different in different religions. To some he is the complete individual of mind-body, body-soul, spiritual-material being. This complete individual is considered as of supreme value, *i.e.*, he is to be *saved entire*. In others it is only the spiritual part of him, a soul, or self, that is to be saved; and this soul or self apparently has little or nothing to do with the body or the world of time and space. It realizes its true being only when it is cut off from the ordinary world in which men live; the condition of the bodily or social surroundings is of small moment—perhaps the body should be humiliated and society avoided. To be sure, the account is never quite this simple, for the religions that have been this-worldly have also had their monastics; and, on the other hand, the world-fleeing religions have likewise generated their fellowships



and benevolence. But we must judge in this area what is the main drive of each faith.

A part of this same pattern is a moral concern. We might well ask of each faith: "What moral values do you hold up for imitation? What kind of deeds do you consider right, and what kind wrong?" Probably few persons in the world today would be willing to call a religion "good" if, like that of the Thugs of India, it produced a cult of assassination and robbery. And no doubt we are justified in looking on religions that seem to be weak in moral consciousness—with no clear code of right and wrong, good or bad—as inferior religions. That is, one can respect a religion that has a clearly defined morality more than one which does not, even though some of its principles may be different from his own.

Another part of the pattern of personal and social value on which we must judge any religion is the kind of society it seeks to create. Some religions would turn men from society and social life as being evil in themselves—as representing an unworthy dilution of life's spiritual perfection, or even a barrier to personal perfection. Social duties are to be totally escaped, *if possible*; and in any case as *much* as possible. Others enforce such a complete distinction between sexes, or among races or social classes, as to make some members of the community into second-class, or even third-class, religious citizens. Still others have sought to redeem society itself, and bring men to live as brothers in a world characterized by co-operation and mutual helpfulness. Whatever our decision about *how* to evaluate such factors, they must inevitably be evaluated by any serious view of life.

There is finally a very practical question: "*What kind of living and character does this faith produce?*" Again, such a question is difficult to answer because of the nature of the factors involved. There are many elements that produce Christian, Mohammedan, Buddhist, or Jewish character besides the purely religious. It is scarcely ever easy to say with perfect simplicity: "Your religious beliefs, and they only, have made you this or that kind of person." As before observed, religious people often live far differently from, or well below, their professions, so that strangely different results come from the same doctrines—or strangely similar lives from different doctrines. Yet ideas do have an effect on life and character, and men of faith everywhere cannot avoid the very practical query: "What does your religion do for you, or make of you?"—a question far more often unspoken than spoken, but no less important for that. And when one can say, "I do not notice that his religion makes that man any more secure, or happy, or kind, or honest than his nonreligious fellow," there is good reason, whatever its pretensions, to doubt its worth.

This very pragmatic and practical appeal to the products of religious faith is

one every religion must meet. It is true that moral and personal standards vary, but it is also true that almost everywhere in the earth certain basic personal qualities of honesty, generosity, serenity, kindness, and the like have been highly esteemed; certainly this would be true if we were to consider the bulk of Confucian, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and Mohammedan cultures—and even many primitive ones. The question then is: which of these faiths, or branches thereof, seems to produce most abundantly or dependably the man of saintly character? And still further: which of these has the most inner vitality, that peculiar religious quality of joyful radiance? Though no one could make an over-all generalization, and say that one faith always produces more of this than another, it is undoubtedly true that many individuals actually make their decisions about the worth of competing religious faiths on the basis of their observation of such factors—however limited their opportunity for such observations. Practically speaking, this will continue to be the most important of all the factors evaluated.

Our judgment of two religions we are comparing would, then, run somewhat in this fashion: that religion is the better or more adequate that provides a more satisfactory account of the universe and man, coherent with the rest of our knowledge and experience; that more readily enables man to realize the fullness of his individual self and achieve a better society; that more consistently produces good character and the quality of radiant, religious living. Presumably the best religion would be the one truest in idea and best in its effect on man and his society.

Obviously, when we seek to apply this to concrete situations the problem is by no means simple; for different people disagree as to what is the most adequate idea of the universe, or the best society, or the best conduct; each of these standards has been differently applied by different people at different times. But the point is that it is on such grounds that people have at least *sought* in all ages to evaluate religion. Thus T. R. Glover writes somewhere that Christianity made a victorious sweep of the Mediterranean world in the early centuries of the Christian era because Christians “out-thought, out-lived, and out-died” the pagans. Essentially the same could be said of the spread of any religious faith, past or present: it succeeds in winning new converts because it seems to them to be truer in idea, to bring the good society nearer, or to achieve a joyful serenity (or perhaps all three) better than any alternative view of life.

#### b. *The Right to Proselytize*

This leads us to that much disputed question: “Do religions have a moral right to proselytize, to seek converts from other faiths?” Many in our day have for varied reasons denied to any and all religions such a privilege. There have



been those religionists who have resented the invasion of a country or culture of one predominant faith by another, for fear that their own power might be undermined and a "false" religion substituted for the "true." There have been others who have sought to preserve the natural religious wild-life of certain regions for purposes of future study. And others have suggested that since all religions are essentially true—or equally false, as we have noted—it makes no difference which religion one espouses; that it is an insult to the self-respect of peoples to seek to convert them to another than their ancestral faith. Even on the part of many "heathen" peoples (so called by Christians), nationalistic and ethnic pride are dictating to them sentiments of reaction against "foreign" missionary religions. Thus we find a modern Indian expressing himself in the following fashion:

Whole generations of our people grew up convinced that our own [language] was gibberish because our conquerors told us that. They sent politicians to change our government, missionaries to teach us whom we must worship. And so convinced were they of their superiority that gradually we began to believe in it too. . . . Then Gandhi came, and overnight this changed. He had all that the West could offer our country [by way of education], and he returned it and said it was not enough! Not enough. For years, generations, the white man had been almost a god to the people of Asia. And now Gandhi had said it was not enough and had given them back the whole culture of the West. . . . Once again we could hold up our heads; we could worship our gods without feeling ashamed. We could aspire to something greater than being highly paid servants of a foreign government.<sup>1</sup>

Yet there seems to be no legitimate reason to deny a way of life or faith the right to propagate itself—provided only it does not use coercive pressures either overtly or covertly. (In the case just cited there have obviously been, besides the purely religious factors, many elements of social and political coercion.) For missionary effort is essentially only a public comparison of ideas and moral values; and if a faith has the conviction that its ideas and values are worth spreading abroad, it should no doubt have the opportunity. Indeed, such interchange of ideas and values is taking place in every other area; in educational institutions, political forums, the competitive sale of goods and services, and international affairs, such interchange and comparison are, as a desirable matter of course, constantly taking place. In fact, it is only where we have totalitarianisms, either in religion or politics, or where it is held that religion is not worth discussion, that there is opposition to the free intermingling of religious faiths and comparison of ideas. Here, then, as elsewhere, we might say: "Let the best man win. Let those religious ideas and values that have the capacity to arouse the most conviction come out on top."

<sup>1</sup> John Frederick Meuhl, *Interview with India*, John Day Co., 1950, pp. 203 f.

Actually there has been, and will continue to be, a considerable interchange of religious ideas and values—whether the experts approve of it or not. Just as nearly all cultures are feeling the push of the tides of technical exploitation of natural resources, the stir of scientific ideas, and the excitement of new social and political currents, so too most of the major religions are becoming acutely aware of other faiths. The Christian missionary has made the faiths of the Orient sharply aware of themselves and their failures; and in the light of the Christian criticism they have re-examined their moral teachings and social practices. The same might be said of many Moslem countries, which are currently very sensitive to Christian criticism of Moslem morality in general and the practice of polygamy in particular.

Nor has this process been one-sided—even though in the majority of cases Christianity has been the active missionary religion in other cultures. Missionary Christianity, which has often operated with the black-white scheme of ideas—all your ideas and values are all wrong, all of ours are all right—has been forced, in the light of counter-criticism, to examine itself. It has been made aware of its harsh dogmatism, of the failures of Western civilization in its emphasis on material values, its aggressive warlikeness, its excessive individualism, and its un-Christian discrimination among races. Particularly has this occurred in India. E. Stanley Jones, notable Christian missionary of our generation, has written at length in several of his books about the influence of his experiences of fellowship with those of other religions on his own formulation of the Christian faith; in particular in his *Christ of the Round Table* he has recounted the story of his attempt to bring together the believers of several faiths in a sharing meeting, in which each sought to say what his religion meant to him without attempting to force his belief on others.

Nor in this connection can we forget to mention Gandhi again. Gandhi was perhaps the world's best example of the mingling of diverse religious influences—though he himself said that he found them all within his own ancestral faith. Brought up as a devout Hindu, though with some Moslem acquaintances, he went to England as a young man to study law. There he came into contact with Christians who sought to convert him to their faith. He was receptive but not convinced. The Old Testament he found without meaning, but the New—especially the Sermon on the Mount—spoke movingly to him. He found considerable inspiration also in Tolstoy's extreme pacifism.

The result seems to have been that, though he remained in his Hindu faith—indeed, went on to study it more thoroughly as a reaction to the efforts of those who sought to convert him from it—he viewed it with new eyes. A social concern that is largely foreign to world-denying Hinduism came to bulk ever more largely in his thought. It may have been present in Hinduism already, as Gandhi asserted, but it had in any case lain dormant there through many cen-



turies; it was the Gandhi that had been touched with Christian influence who was able to discover anew the social values of Hinduism. Thus in South Africa he used Tolstoy's non-violent resistance—the application of “soul-force,” he called it—to protest against racial discrimination. Returned to India, he led several movements of passive resistance against British rule, which were a potent factor in finally uniting his people against Britain; and he became a steadfast personal opponent of the caste system with which Hinduism had lived unprotestingly for centuries. He mingled, with his social concern gained from Christianity, a spirit of tolerance gained from his Hindu background. He became something of a saint, not only to Hindu, but also to Christian and Moslem, all of whom saw in him one of the best living examples of religious faith.

Does this mean that in the end all men will come to espouse one faith as the result of their comparisons and mutual knowledge of each other's faith? Or does it mean that a new universal faith compounded of all the faiths thus met will come into being? Probably not; attempts to found such universal faiths have not met with great success. Nanak, who lived during the 15th and 16th centuries in India, sought to join Hinduism and Islam in a new faith. He was rejected by members of both communities; and the Sikhs (Seekers), whose first leader he was, today form one more faith group to add to the multiplicity of such groups in India. Baha'i, coming into being in Persia in the past century, has also sought to achieve universality, and its beautiful tower at Wilmette, Illinois, is nine-sided to symbolize its union of the best of nine different religious faiths. Yet it remains a small minority, classified by most Americans as another “crank” sect. As W. E. Hocking points out in his book, *Living Religions and a World Faith*,<sup>2</sup> the modern world feels the deep need of *both* a universal world religious viewpoint, and the particular formulation of that faith in the doctrines, ritual, and fellowship of some specific church or sect. This means that traditional religious loyalties and viewpoints are usually too deeply rooted to be exchanged for any amalgam of a few or all faiths in the name of “universal” religion. Each will find his own faith-forms more meaningful and congenial than another's, or than any average of the common denominators of them all; but each will be modified and enriched by its intercourse with other faiths and thus ease to a great degree the causes of religious hostility.

## 2. Religion in the Modern World

### a. Criticisms

This prospective mutual enrichment of religions is not, however, quite the end of the matter; for there are many who would suggest that all religions—that is religion in any form—be given up as undesirable or irrelevant to our

<sup>2</sup> Macmillan, 1940, *passim*.

modern world; it is a way of life and thinking, they would say, however much it may have done in the past, that does nothing essential for humanity now.

One man finds the central assertion of all religion, of whatever sort, meaningless—even harmful for morality:

No more immoral advice could be given to our time than the not infrequent exhortation of some popular preachers that morality would be a sham unless God exists. . . . If God exists, his will is either in accord with what is right for men to do on grounds independent of his existence, or it is not so in accord. In the former case, knowledge of his existence would have no bearing on the content of his moral principles. . . . In the latter case, knowledge of his existence would change the content of moral principles; but to what extent and in what ways, it is useless to consider until both his existence and his will come to be known. . . . To tell men that life has no meaning without belief in the existence of God . . . is to throw away moral certainties and moral probabilities in order to try by that absurd means to inveigle people into accepting a theology for which there is no evidence.<sup>3</sup>

Another individual finds that religion has failed because it has not been able to present the world with a unifying idea—or at least get the world to accept such an idea:

The world is now one; we are entering a period of universalism. From now on only universal ideas can be effective. The great world religions and ideologies of the past have sought universality but failed to achieve it. Communism fails because it offers too narrow a view of man, and Christianity, at least as known up to now, does not meet the needs of countless millions in Asia and elsewhere. Today the only hope of social order lies in the establishment of a valid universalism, a doctrine true to the nature of *homo sapiens* and, so, acceptable to all people.<sup>4</sup>

Julian Huxley has recently told the First International Congress on Humanism and Ethical Culture that religion was on the whole synonymous with superstition, and that "the Roman Catholic stand on birth control and India's belief in sacred cows are good examples of religion's retarding influence."<sup>5</sup> Another writer in a current magazine does not find that religion has produced any distinctively valuable fruits in personal living—at least not the brand of Christian faith she has known:

Among my acquaintances I would guess that roughly half have definite faith in a supreme being and half do not. After studying them for a number of years I cannot say that the freethinkers as a group lack any quality that the devout possess. There are neurotics in both groups, and likewise examples of enormous courage,

<sup>3</sup> Sterling Lamprecht, "Naturalism and Religion," *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, V. H. Krikorian, ed., Columbia University Press, 1944, pp. 37 f.

<sup>4</sup> L. L. Whyte, *The Next Development in Man*, Henry Holt, Mentor ed., 1950, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> *Time* magazine, "Religion," September 1, 1952.



compassion, and honesty. Judging by my observation of the people I know, I should say that religious faith does not make people live happier or die easier, or accept the deaths of their beloved ones with more equanimity. . . .<sup>6</sup>

And of course everyone is somewhat aware of the Communist doctrine that religion is socially harmful, an opiate for the masses that diverts their attention from their oppressed condition and economic exploitation by promising them compensation in a future life.

It should be observed that such a denial of the worth or need of any specific religion is increasingly viewed by many people in the world as a very live option. It is not so much a question of which one of two religions a person shall accept, but of whether he shall accept any religion at all. Particularly has this been true in those areas where religion has been for many centuries a socially retarding force.

There is Turkey, for example. Known for a generation or more as the politically sick man of Europe, ingloriously defeated in World War I, she had sunk in everyone's estimation to the bottom of the heap by the early '20's. Kemal Ataturk was convinced that this low status was in great part due to the religious conservatism of her culture. He and his Young Turks carried out a political and social reform that overthrew the shadow rule of Islam's caliph, and, though not precisely *antireligious* in spirit, the reform was certainly non-religious (secular) in its viewpoint, methods, and goals. The attitude of the reformers was that in so far as religion was a cultural quality it might remain, but that whichever of its usages hindered material prosperity, social progress, and political strength, must go.

There are other examples. Though India as a whole is deeply religious, some of her leaders, like Nehru, are nonreligious, and are seeking to organize India on the basis of purely political and economic advantage, with only as much reference to religious belief as the necessity for popular support demands. Socialism rather than religion seems to be the guiding principle, though religion is granted free exercise. Again, the new State of Israel is in many ways not a religious state. The Orthodox party is strong, but there are also many left-wing parties for whom the Jewish religious tradition is of no consequence; political existence and economic solvency are their great goals. Or one might consider Russian Communism to be another example; it carries on a militant warfare of propaganda and oppressive measures against organized religion in the countries under its control, allowing only such measure of religious expression as is necessary to prevent widespread discontent among the people and, if possible, only in such forms as can be used for state purposes.

<sup>6</sup> Priscilla Robinson, "What Shall I tell My Children?" *Harper's Magazine*, No. 1227, August, 1952, p. 22.

The general lines of the protest against traditional religion are therefore reasonably clear; but the underlying reasons for it need to be specified a little more narrowly. There is in most cases a considerable degree of disbelief in any transcendent values or beings; that is, the other-worldliness, the more-than-human value or god, is looked on with suspicion; it is suspected of being both unreal and of being deceptively used by religion to cover up its this-worldly failures. And on the other side of this disbelief in any other world is a tremendous drive for political and economic success in this one. No longer will the "riches of the spirit" satisfy; the supreme goals are the riches of the body, material possessions, and physical power. This dual pressure of disbelief and material desire is undermining the hold of religion throughout the world, particularly in the Orient, where for centuries predominantly other-worldly religions have held the ground.

There is besides this a tremendous and growing confidence in many circles in the power of man to direct his own future destiny. With the understanding of natural processes that science has given us we are able to investigate what were once deemed inscrutable mysteries, or mysteries at best illumined only by a dim religious light. We can carry on researches into the origin of the solar system, the ultimate constitution of the physical universe, the beginnings of life, the nature of physical death, the characteristics of the mental and "spiritual" nature of man, and the growth of moral principles in the individual. With the power science has put into our hands we can exert increasing control over nature and her supposedly divine powers for blessing and punishment. We can control the flow of rivers, greatly increase the production of food, overcome many diseases that were once looked on as punishment for sin, and materially lengthen human life.

It is, then, to a humanism that is sure it knows what it wants from life, that disbelieves in any power that will help it achieve such goals and believes in the power of scientific technique to help achieve its desires, that much of the modern world is turning. It may be willing to give due credit to religion for some of its *past* performances of humanitarian idealism, but it also points out that they are past, and besides were often coupled with the repulsive evils of persecution, conservatism, and social stagnancy. And it may also recognize that a certain emotional displacement will result if religions are completely discountenanced; there will remain an unsatisfied hunger for cosmic support, a yearning for the sense of mystic communion with a Greater Being, or a sense of losing one's absolute values. Yet, even though that is the case, there is little else, says the new viewpoint, to be done; and perchance the situation is not as bad as it seems. Thus one of the previously quoted authors writes:

No; I am convinced that loyalty, sensitivity, public spirit are built into character



by human forces; they may be tied up in people's minds with the idea of God or they may not. But no one need imagine that any depth of passion (or even mysticism) is denied to a well-furnished soul just because he accepts these virtues and emotions as human and not divine.<sup>7</sup>

Another writer finds that the problem of evil loses all its terror and becomes manageable:

It may be said that the effect of the modern approach is to take evils out of the context of superstition. They cease to be signs and portents symbolizing the whole of human destiny and become specific and distinguishable situations to be dealt with. . . . They are then seen to be of long duration and of short, preventable, curable, or inevitable.<sup>8</sup>

And another believes that one can find in science—at least in what science may become—the saving universal ideas:

Such a universal doctrine can only emerge from the broadening of science. We are in a scientific age, and science alone has the technique to discover, and the authority to present a view of nature and man which can be accepted by men and women everywhere. . . . The next step is for science to become so truly scientific, so comprehensive and humane that instead of damaging man it can teach him how to live by showing him the truth about nature and himself.<sup>9</sup>

#### b. *Purgation and Reconstruction*

What, then, has religion to say in response to such attacks on its truth and value? Perhaps the first thing that it needs to do is to confess its own failures and correct its own weaknesses; that is to say, not all religion has been or is good, simply because it is called religion; one cannot conscientiously defend all religion against all science, all secularism, all humanism, or all atheism. Sometimes the man who has called himself an atheist—as far as the contemporary gods or ideas of God were concerned—has been more truly religious than the professional religionists of his time. He has been, for example, unwilling to pretend to worship the God of immoral character or utter cruelty sometimes presented by contemporary religions, and has proclaimed that he could not worship at all, unless it were a God of justice and love. Or, again, the man who has bitterly attacked organized religion because of its social conservatism and greed for power, its willingness to gloss over great social injustices and moral wrong if only its ritual trappings were conserved, has had more claim to be called prophet and saint than any of its gloriously robed and honored officialdom.

<sup>7</sup> Priscilla Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Lippmann, *A Preface to Morals*, Macmillan, 1929, pp. 217 f.

<sup>9</sup> Whyte, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

Religions, therefore, must be ready to purge themselves of their superstitions, their moral blindness and apathy, and their insensitivity to human need and aspiration in this present world, if they are to speak convincingly to modern men. World events, the advances of human knowledge, and the greater ease of intercommunication will no doubt force some of this self-cleansing on religion from the outside. As we noted in the conclusion of the chapter on the nature and destiny of man, some of those religions like Buddhism and Hinduism, which have been largely indifferent to human welfare, are being pushed out of their monkish contemplation into active social awareness. And Christianity, though it has always had an active humanitarian tradition, has been forced into ever-increasing awareness of its social responsibility. But unless and until religions perform this cleansing inwardly for themselves, they cannot speak clearly and forcefully to the modern world; for that world needs to be reconvinced that religion has a genuine and effective concern for the enlargement and enrichment of the life of humanity. If religion has nothing to say—or even actually stands in the way—of the modern drive toward freedom, equality of individuals and peoples, and economic abundance, it will be viewed with vast impatience or even hostility.

The task different religions face will vary with their past history, the nature of their faith, and the cultural situation in which they live. For some it will be difficult if not impossible to adjust to new demands, because of their heavy weight of tradition and custom, the ponderous heritage of a long, static past; it may be that in the end only certain faiths will survive. A great deal of primitivism, for example, will never make the grade of survival under the pressures of other religions, and—even more serious—the encroachments of technized civilization. The ancient pattern of life cannot survive the new and unequal struggle; and, tragically, sometimes it may even spell the disappearance of the people themselves. At best they may live, by the tacit permission of the rest of the world, in sequestered corners of the earth, until natural resources are discovered in their territory or until their habitat is found to be of strategic military value.

Other religions are faced with different problems, though some of the same outside forces are operative here too. For example, how can Hinduism, which has been world-denying, caste-ridden, and politically unconcerned, become a socially dynamic force in modern India? Though its elastic religious terminology may to a large degree enable it to absorb the impact of competing religions and scientific doctrines, how can it shed its age-old pessimism and indifference to the present world, or find in its religious heritage the moral drive to reform society? Such reform movements as there have been have come largely from composite movements like the Brama Samaj, an attempted Hindu-Christian



synthesis, or from individuals like Gandhi. And even Gandhi sought to oppose the increasingly rapid pace of Indian industrialization by a back-to-the-spinning-wheel movement.

Roughly the same might be said of Buddhism. Though blest with the same doctrinal elasticity as Hinduism, and not bound to a caste structure, it has also been cursed with an almost complete lack of social ethic. Nichiren Buddhism in Japan has achieved something of a prophetic and reforming quality, but it stands almost alone among the Buddhist sects. For centuries Buddhism has represented, wherever it has gone, political inactivity, a doctrine of harmless benevolence, and general other-worldliness. Now and again in recent years it has sought, in imitation of the Christian missionary, to take up a more vigorous reformist note, but has found next to no resources in its tradition for reforming a world from which it has consistently sought to escape. Obviously neither Hinduism nor Buddhism has much to offer by way of a social philosophy or program of action in opposition to a militant Communism; such effective opposition as there is to Communism in the Far East does not come from Buddhist sources, except by way of passive, age-old conservatism; and in India many of the new non-Communist leaders do not come from orthodox Hindu religious ranks, but from among nonreligious liberals like Nehru.

If we consider Shintoism, its problem is of a different sort. On the intellectual and ethical side it possesses few natural resources; its mythology and worship are scarcely capable of any satisfying rationalization, and it has no ethical code of universal applicability, but rather a set of cultural manners suited to Japan. Many of its Western-educated people have turned away to nonreligious agnosticism. Its main strength is to be found in its concentration of loyalty and religious emotion about the emperor and Japanese peoplehood. The question for Shintoism is whether—if its national and social ways of life are altered or broken—it can provide a new pattern of reconstruction, or whether it can exist save in terms of a militant nationalism.

As far as Confucianism is concerned we may say that, as a religion or semi-religion, it has long since been dead; as noted, its personalized religious functions were long ago taken over by Buddhism and Taoism, and it became primarily a social ethic. Even so, it came to represent a static and conservative force because of Confucius' idealization of the past as perfect, and his glorification of a feudal social order. Though China is indelibly impressed with the ethical principle, the sober rationality, and the family-centered pattern of society taught by Confucians, the "soft" humanism of Confucius is being enveloped by the "hard" humanism of Communism and has little to oppose such a transformation but the force of inertia and tradition.

Superficially we might expect something different from Islam. It grew out

of the Jewish and Christian contexts, in which the voice of social conscience has spoken more strongly than in most other religious faiths. And indeed, as we have seen, Islam *has* made a strenuous effort to apply its truth directly to human social life in all its phases. Yet somehow Islam early lost the prophetic note found in the Jewish Old Testament. Perhaps its long career of successful conquest weakened its power of moral and religious insight. The ethical and social pattern it adopted was the rather primitive one of the Arabian desert, with only minor modifications; and the religious competition it faced in its early formative period, when Mohammed wrote the Koran, was primarily that of this same desert primitivism. Thus Islam's quite literalistic application of the Koran, as it stood, to all the societies it conquered, has been followed consistently ever since, without much thought of progressive change or self-criticism. So Moslem countries have slumbered on for centuries, shut off for the most part from the rest of the world by fierce devotion to their way of faith, rejecting the forces of Greek rationalism that so powerfully affected Christianity, and looking with suspicion on all innovation. Islam's great question is whether she can find the resources for social change and reform, can accomplish an adequate rationalization of her faith, and initiate a thorough moral rehabilitation within her tradition, or must depend on strong-armed secular reformers who are lukewarm or hostile to the faith to perform these tasks for Moslem countries.

And finally, what shall we say of Judaism and Christianity in the modern world? Certainly here, if anywhere, the voice of the morally and socially sensitive prophet has spoken; Jews and Christians have with few exceptions been militant activists in human societies. They alone of all faiths have presented the world something of a philosophy of history. Better than any other faiths, they would seem fitted to meet the antireligious forces of the day. And in a sense this may well be true; that if there is to be a religious renovation of the world and a religiously oriented world society, it will come from Judeo-Christian inspiration; certainly here alone has there been a religious humanism that counters the secular humanisms of our day.

But these faiths too have developed their liabilities and shown their weaknesses which they must deal with from the inside before they can fulfill their apparent destiny. Judaism remains wedded to a minority racial-cultural group despite all that may be said or done about it. Much of this bondage to the particularism of a small group is not the fault of Judaism; however universal its principles, the forces of history and the fires of persecution have driven it into narrow physical confines. But there also has been a strong sense of particular mission, a consciousness of their vocation as a chosen people, that has operated to intensify this same narrowness. That is to say, Judaism has in part voluntarily chosen her separateness; it has not all been forced on her. And such sep-



arateness will always have difficulty in communicating itself to the world at large, no matter how universal its faith, how vigorous its social principles.

Though Christianity theoretically avoids the particularism of Judaism because it is in the full sense a world or universal religion, it too has its difficulties. It has often become wedded to a particular civilization, from which it has been unable to separate itself. It has tolerated social abuses—sometimes with the most patent hypocrisy; it has sometimes veered away from active social concern in an excess of other-worldliness. It has produced—though perhaps not single-handedly—the most technized and warlike nations known in world history. And it has excelled to perfection in its internal divisiveness and sectarian hostilities. Thus, though it may well have the most resource within its tradition to speak to the modern world situation, it needs to rediscover and reinterpret that tradition in an effective manner; its great natural resources are often only latent potentialities.

### c. *Religion, Science, and Humanism*

If religions should then find it possible to draw water out of their own wells and apply it to the refreshment of the world, what would they say in answer to this-worldly humanisms that propose to turn from them to the sciences for their guidance, and for their main hope to human resources? First of all, they would question the *methods* by which the modern world intends to arrive at its goals. With full recognition of the immense physical and intellectual benefits scientific effort has conferred on the human race; with honest acknowledgment of science's right to examine religious doctrines that touch on the scientific domain, and criticize those religious institutions which affect human life; with generous allowance for the high standard of selfless service of truth and social welfare displayed by a multitude of scientists—with all this in mind religion would still question the capacity of science to be the final judge in all areas of human life.

Religion would question whether the scientific method of achieving knowledge is the only valid one; are measurable quantities, with which science deals, the only way of apprehending reality? Does not the narrow specialization of techniques science employs cut it off from a wide range of awareness? Can it be said that the only *real* world is the world revealed by pointer readings? And it would further question the capacity of science to set, by its own resources alone, moral or social goals for mankind. Science may well tell us what are the physical nature and capacities of man; it may well describe the psychological mechanisms by which he operates; it can discover many important facts concerning human social life. But can it prescribe and say that truth is better than falsehood, that kindness is better than cruelty, or that psychological maladjust-

ment is always evil? No doubt in a very practical way it pays to be honest more often than to be dishonest, and likewise to be kind rather than cruel. Yet on this ground why should a man be honest or kind when it will not yield him direct benefits? And how can we say, on *scientific* grounds, whether it is the man or his society that is maladjusted? Most of the religious and moral geniuses have been out of step with their time, misfits in their contemporary societies.

Thus, while religion must always be sensitive to scientific criticism, and its truth subject to comparison with scientific truth, it will not surrender its own specific intuitions or moral insights. It is not willing to call what is scientifically efficient or pragmatically successful, *ipso facto* morally right or religiously good; it would still reserve the right to call the most successful political system or the most amazing invention evil, and to say of the seemingly impractical and impossible: "That is what *ought* to be."

There is a second thing to say. Good religion would not necessarily agree with the popular modern statement of the *goals* for human life. It is obvious, of course, that other-worldly, next-worldly goals are at present heavily discounted; they are for those who have neither the power nor the intelligence to achieve the good life of this world: abundance of health, self-expression, prosperity; to speak of a kind of good life that does not major in such items is to betray ignorance or duplicity. And there is no doubt that religions *have* often emphasized another world because they could not deal satisfactorily with the present one; men have fled the world to become religionists because they have not been able to achieve success within it, or could not cope with it on its own terms. Thus have religious and spiritual goods, according to much modern thinking, become dishonest substitutes for material ones.

Yet religion has an honest and important witness to bear to the insufficiency of material goals. It can point to a long list of the rarest spirits to be found among men, who have found a material sufficiency insufficient. "Man cannot live by bread alone"; the very attempt to live by bread alone may well make it bitter to the taste. The quality of life is more important than its quantity—such is the perpetual witness of high religion. Religion can also suggest, and truly, that the man who has no other goal than tangible satisfaction is a person with small resources; if he fails of such satisfaction, he fails of all. If his specific plan for self- or world-betterment miscarries, he has cast all his riches on this one throw, and has no other recourse; when he is forced to include pain or failure in his philosophy or practice, he has no way of constructively or meaningfully dealing with human life. In a word, the other-worldly hope and concern of high religion give a richness of additional perspective and resource; they are not merely a compensation for poverty in this world's goods. And it adds im-



mensely to the qualitative enjoyment even of this world; for one is thus not its slave, but its user and its master.

This is why genuine religion is always unwilling to throw away its more-than-human reference; such a reference gives human life, both quantitatively and qualitatively, a perspective to be found nowhere else. There is more to contemplate than the grubbiness of one's daily task; that grubbiness may even shine with the glow of holiness and high worth—provided it is consecrated to more than achieving a livelihood. And not even devotion to the creation of a better society is equivalent to the dedication of all that one does to the will of God. Nor is there any equivalent outside of religion for that sense of companionship with the Divine that religion in its highest moments gives. This, and this alone, gives a superlative worth to all of human life. Indeed, religion assumes—and no doubt rightly—that any human goals which do not include or somehow relate themselves to the goal of conscious God-relatedness are always ultimately insufficient.

There is a third thing that high religion would say: "a strictly humanistic scientism gives us no *standard of measurement* outside the intensity of our own desires." It says that what man wants and wants intensely must be good. And religion has often been pictured as the Great Thwarting of human desires; it has said "Thou shalt not" about so many things for no good reason at all; it has held up to man an unnaturally high and meager standard of goodness. Besides, is it not often true that the "voice of God" turns out to be the voice of the very human mouthpiece of God, giving forth some quite human ideas under the auspices of Deity in order to get a more respectful hearing than he could otherwise expect? Thus it is that God has been made to speak in favor of animal and human sacrifice, prostitution, war, the tortures of the Inquisition, slavery, and class oppression. How does the reference to God do anything but becloud the issues?

The truth of much of this accusation cannot be denied; a bad moral conscience has often been eased in religion by the discovery of a commandment of God which demanded the performance of unrighteousness for some "higher" good. But there is also this to say: the reference to God expresses at least the *hope* of achieving a judgment that is more than the voice of one's own desires. And, factually speaking, it seems in many instances to have been much more than a pious hope. The world's history is full of instances in which men and women have refused to follow a popular course because they have believed themselves commanded by God to a contrary way; no lesser sense of conviction could have given them such lonely, magnificent courage. Sometimes the things for which they stood have seemed to later generations trivial, short-sighted, or even wrong—though many times the religious prophet has been a man *ahead*

of his time, not behind it. Yet the witness that says to men: "There is a law higher than the law of your own desires, a goodness greater than your own pleasure, a right more important than your personal rights," is necessary to our social health, even though it be sometimes mistaken; it is our main guarantee against a slavish adherence to totalitarianisms. (Note Albert Einstein's remark that it was not the liberal newspapers or universities that finally stood against Hitler, but the churches.) It is the ultimate corrective for partial and biased standards of moral goodness that may, in the interests of a few, turn into oppressive tyrannies.

It is worthy of note in this connection that those who make no claim to divine sanction for their values or ways of life, but glory in their humanness, may also pursue their goals with fanatical, even religious zeal. In fact, one might say of nearly all the humanisms urged as replacements for the more-than-humanistic religions that they ultimately become *religious* in function and temper. Or, to put it another way: the soft humanisms, which depend on religious traditions for their moral values but deny any superhuman sanction for those standards, tend to turn into hard humanisms that seek to impose their pattern on others. The humanist devotion to the purely human good may thus become even more authoritarian and absolute than religion at its worst—without even the latent hope of a corrective from within.

There is the case of Nazism, for example, which sought to make of race and racial culture supreme values; presumed superior Teutonic values were imposed on everyone within reach, at incalculable cost of suffering and death. And around the myth of the pure and superior Aryan race was built a religious structure of ritualism and mass psychology. The same might be said of Communist totalitarianism; Communism, at every point of its theory and practice, flatly denies all more-than-human reference. Man is held to be primarily an economic creature; spiritual and other-worldly values are strictly the lures of a priesthood that is the tool of the governing economic class. Historical events are not directed by any God, but are the result of the interplay of the processes of dialectical materialism, which by a series of developing social and economic crises—and with the help of an aggressive working class—pushes on toward revolution and the ultimate classless society. Any means is allowable to achieve this classless society; the truth and goodness of any means are purely relative to the capacity of those means to achieve the dominance of the proletariat. Here is the ultimate humanism of absolute moral relativity, which acknowledges no transcendent standard or Being to which it must be responsible, but recognizes only the supreme goal of achieving the triumph of a particular class (or clique), and the full enforcement of its values.

Yet Communism, as we have suggested, is by way of being a religion; though



its values may be limited, it urges an absolute commitment of mind and effort, religious in quality; there is no room in its loyalties for other than an absolute devotion to the current leader and current party policy—in body, mind, heart, or soul. It preaches its dogma of world history with the finality of the millennialist announcing the Second Coming of Christ; and Marxian writings are given the reverence due to Sacred Writ. Its heroes of the past, like Lenin, are accorded saintlike character; its leaders of the present are given the status of nearly all-powerful and all-wise Saviours. And the Party evangelizes the masses throughout the world with the Messianic conviction that on its efforts depends the coming of the Marxist Kingdom of Man.

This is not to say that all humanist denial of religion will become Marxian—even though that is its *logical* terminus; but it is to suggest that all philosophies that try to present man with a full-scale orientation for his living are bound to end up as religions of some sort. This is inevitable because of the human situation; for the human situation is implicitly religious, and man cannot escape it if he would; he is the creature of forces mightier than he, and his fate rests in their hands. How can he avoid asking of what sort they are? or from whence he came? or whither he goes? He feels the compulsions of his nature as a rational and moral person. Hence he cannot avoid making decisions in the light of what he considers to be right or good, or what he considers best fits his nature and destiny; how, then, can he avoid concerning himself with the fate of his cherished values, or their relation to the universe at large? How can he escape the conviction that some of his values are not his own creations to play with or alter at will, but standards that demand of him an absolute obedience, and that are greater than he? Thus religion of some sort is implicit in his makeup and in his cosmic situation.

Sometimes he avoids giving this, his religion, any concrete formulation; or he believes that in rebelling against a specific religion he has cast aside all religiousness from his life. But what has actually happened is only that he has substituted something else, in place of the traditional religious values and objects of reverence, as meriting his supreme devotion. Sometimes he militantly sets out to cultivate other than the religious values, strictly emphasizing their human origin; but in the end he gives them a religious status and a species of worship. The ultimate question for man is, then, not whether he will have a religion or *no* religion, but *which* of the world's many religions, or current substitutes for them, he will espouse as his faith. And to this his final selection—deliberate or accidental, stated or unconsciously assumed, traditional or substitute—he can do no less than devote the fullest measure of his resources of mind and heart, as long as he remains a human being in a world which inexorably demands from him personal, practical, and moral decisions about ultimate courses of action.

## GLOSSARY OF LESS FAMILIAR TERMS

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- Absolute:** a term used to indicate ultimate reality or being. Sometimes equated with Brahman (Hinduism), or with God (Christianity). Often has impersonal connotations.
- apocalyptic:** referring, literally, to the uncovering of hidden, secret knowledge. Applied to books (Daniel, Revelation), or writers who profess to disclose unknown facts about future events in a code-symbolism understood only by the faithful.
- arhat** (ur'hat): Sanskrit term used by Buddhists to indicate the enlightened saint who will attain Nirvana upon physical death. He has freed himself from earthly attachments (sometimes arahant).
- Arian:** a party in the Christian Church during the creedal deliberations of the 4th century A.D. Named after Arius, who declared that Christ was a subordinate being, not eternal Deity. Declared heretical.
- Aryan:** from Buddhism, denoting what is good or noble, as the Aryan way or Aryan truths. A relic of the days of the Aryan conquerors of India.
- asceticism:** self-denial and the practice of physical austerities, for the sake of self-discipline and increase of spiritual insight.
- atman** (aht'man): old Hindu term for the spiritual self or soul of man, which achieves release by realizing its likeness to and identity with Brahman, the World Soul.
- avatar** (av-a-tahr'): an incarnation of a god; a god appearing in human (or animal) form. Used in Hinduism. (See incarnation.)
- Bhagavad** (bug'a-vad): the adored or adorable one, *i.e.*, a god. Frequently translated "Lord" and most often applied to Krishna. Bhagavad-gita (bug'a-vad-gee'ta) is "the song of the Lord," a scripture of the worshipers of Vishnu.
- bhakti** (buck'ti): Hindu term for "devotional faith," *i.e.*, emotional, personal loyalty to a god. Applied to the theology and worship of theistic Indian sects. Bhakta are those who worship after the bhakti manner, primarily devotees of Rama, Krishna, and Shiva.
- Brahmā** (brah-mah'): personalized form of *brahman*, "power of prayer." One of the ancient Hindu gods, still worshiped in India.
- Brahman** (brah'man): impersonal or neuter form. Hindu term for ultimate reality. Functions as God, yet more in the nature of a pantheistic World Soul or eternal spiritual substance. The Hindu Absolute.
- Brahmanism:** the ancient priestly and sacrificial religion of early India.



- Brahmin:** name of the highest caste in Indian society; priests and teachers of the Vedas. (Also spelled Brahman.)
- caliph (kay'liff):** traditional political and spiritual ruler of all Moslems, as the successor of Mohammed. The caliphate was finally discontinued after the Young Turk revolution in the 1920's swept the incumbent from power.
- caste:** Indian social division, into which one is born; four major castes (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, Shudras), but many subgroups and occupational castes, as well as religious ones, have developed.
- Catholic:** original meaning, "universal." Applied by the main body of early Christians to themselves to indicate their world-wide character. Since applied as a proper name to Roman and Greek Orthodox Catholics.
- Conservative:** modern, middle-of-the-road group in Judaism that seeks to maintain historic continuity by using the ancient liturgical forms, but adapts itself to new situations by relaxing some ancient usages, such as dietary habits.
- cult:** the ritualistic system of a religious group. Sometimes used loosely as a synonym for a religious sect.
- Deism:** a rationalistic religious development of the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe and America. Belief in a deity (or God) as he is seen in nature; opposed to a specially revealed religion.
- depravity:** a Calvinist term, applied to the sinful and disobedient (depraved) nature of all unsaved men.
- divine:** referring to the supernatural spiritual powers or Power in the universe. "Divinity" is often loosely equated with "deity."
- ecstasy:** a state of intense emotional excitement in which the experient is temporarily unaware of the physical world about him. Interpreted as possession by, or contact with, God or spiritual reality. (See trance.)
- Eucharist (yew'kar-ist):** Greek and Roman Catholic name for the rite of Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper.
- excommunication:** official and final severance of sacramental relationship with a religious group; initiated by the group. Particularly applicable to Greek and Roman Catholics.
- fertility rites:** religious ceremonial centering about the procreative forces either in nature or man or both.
- fetish:** small object of reverence. Functions as portable idol, though not necessarily an image.
- guru (goo'roo):** Indian name for spiritual teacher, father confessor, and leader.
- Hebrews:** the remote biological ancestors of modern Jews. Hebrew (and Hebraic) apply to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, roughly down to the time of the Exile (586 B.C.). Sometimes loosely applied to Jews in a racial sense. (See Israelite, Jew.)
- henotheism:** belief in and service of one's special god, without actual denial of the existence of other gods.

- hierarchy: a graded system of officials, from lower to higher in pyramidal pattern. Applied to authoritarian church structures or officials, as in Tibetan Buddhism and Roman Catholicism.
- Hinayana (heen-a-yah'na): literally the "small vehicle." The older form of Buddhism, which tended to concentrate on individual salvation rather than on compassionate works or missionary endeavor. (See Mahayana.) Found today in Ceylon, Burma, Siam.
- incarnation: literally "enfleshment" or "embodiment." Refers to the belief that spirits or gods dwell in human or animal bodies. Christianity teaches that Jesus was the incarnation of God.
- indulgence: official act of the Roman Catholic Church that cancels punishments for sin imposed by the church on earth, by God in purgatory.
- ineffable: that which cannot be communicated in words. Used by mystics to refer to ecstatic experiences.
- inner light: a Quaker term indicating "that of God" which is in every man. Inner spiritual illumination from God.
- Islam (iz-lahm'): name preferred by the followers of Mohammed for their faith.
- Israel and Israelite: Hebrew nation and inhabitants in general. Specifically: Israel was the name given to Jacob, whose twelve sons were called the "children of Israel" or Israelites, *i.e.*, Hebrews. Israel also was the name used to indicate the northern Hebrew kingdom (933-722 B.C.). (See Hebrew, Jew.)
- Jew: literally, of the tribe of Judah, one of the twelve sons of Jacob (Israel). Used of Hebrew survivors of the Exile (all of them Judahites) who returned to Jerusalem, and of their modern racial and religious descendants.
- Judaism: the Jewish religious group and its practices. (See Conservative, Reform, Orthodox.)
- Karma: literally, "the deed." The Buddhist-Hindu term for that absolutely impartial, inexorable justice that governs one's rebirth according to his merits.
- Koran (koh-rah'n'): the sacred scriptures of Moslems. (Sometimes Qur'an.)
- Krishna: warrior hero of the *Bhagavad-gita*, who was later considered to be an incarnation of Vishnu.
- Mahayana (ma-hah-yah'na): literally the "large vehicle" or vessel bearing one to salvation. The later missionary brand of Buddhism that carried the faith throughout north and east Asia. Buddha worshipped as a god. (See Hinayana.)
- mana (mah'nah): a spiritual or life force pervading all things, though concentrated in some places, things, and people, according to primitive thought. Not to be confused with "manna," the miraculous bread of the Old Testament.
- Mara (mah'ra): the tempter of Buddha; chief evil spirit.
- Maya (mah'yah): often translated "illusion." Term used in Hinduism to describe the world of sense, time, and personal existence, as less real than Brahman. "Illusion," in sense of totally unreal, probably too strong.
- metaphysical: literally "beyond the physical." Philosophical term for the ultimately real that is "behind" or "beyond" visible appearances.



Mohammedan: follower of Mohammed, or Moslem. Mohammedanism refers to the faith. Moslems prefer the terms Moslem and Islam.

*moksha*: release or salvation, a Hindu term. (Also spelled *moksa*.)

monism: theory of the world as composed of one and only one basic substance, either spiritual or material.

monotheism: belief in and worship of one supreme and only God.

Moslem: literally, the "surrendered" or "submitted" one. The follower of Mohammed. Sometimes also Muslim, Muslem, or Mussulman. (See Mohammedan.)

myth: an account, usually religious, which is not literally true or fully historical, but which may be meaningful or significant.

Nirvana: (near-vah'nah) Buddhist term for final salvation. A state of "going out" into a spiritual fourth dimension where there is no suffering. (Also, Nibbana.)

orthodox: in general, that which is standard or officially recognized religious teaching and practice. When capitalized, Orthodox refers (1) to the strictest branch of traditional Judaism that calls for obedience to the full Law, or (2) to the Eastern (Orthodox) Christian Church which separated from the Roman Church in A.D. 1054.

other-worldly: a strong religious emphasis on the spiritual or ideal world, or life after death. Contrasted to "this-worldly" adjustment to present life.

outcaste: one who by birth or disregard of social regulations is disowned by all established castes in India. He is ceremonially unclean for worship in any temple or association with caste members.

pantheism: literally, "all-God" or "God-everywhere" belief. The doctrine that God is literally in everything, a diffused presence, not a personal being.

polytheism: belief and worship of more than one, usually of many, gods.

predestination: Calvinistic doctrine that God has elected (ordained) some men to salvation, some to damnation, even before they were born.

Puranas (poo-rah'nas): Hindu sacred writings, subsequent to the Vedas, containing epics, creation stories.

purgatory: a place of purging in which saved but still imperfect souls are prepared by suffering for heaven. Roman Catholic doctrine. Loosely applied to Hindu-Buddhist "hells."

Rama (rah'mah): one of the heroes (like Krishna) of the epic stories, who was later deified as an incarnation or avatar of Vishnu.

Reform: Reform Judaism; the liberal wing of Jewish opinion and practice, which uses vernacular language in its worship and discards many traditional habits.

reincarnation: rebirth of the individual soul or life-impulse in a new body (human, animal, plant) as governed by the Law of Karma. Hindus and Buddhists believed the rebirths were infinite in number, unless the individual found salvation from them.

revelation: a special communication from God to human beings in the form of writings, inspired words, or historical events.

rite: a ceremonial practice of a religion. "Ritual" applies to the whole ceremonial structure; "liturgy" to a formal order of worship.

- sacrament: specifically, any holy ritual act commanded by Christ; generally, the more solemn ritual acts of any religion.
- sect: a body of religious believers. Usually applied to small and bizarre groups, though no clear line exists between "sect," "denomination," "church." *E.g.*, Roman Catholics sometimes term Protestant churches "sects."
- shaman (shah'man): priest-magician in primitive religion who is supposed to be in communication with spirits by means of dreams and trances.
- Shiva (shee'vah) also spelled "Siva": The god of creative and destructive force. Along with Vishnu, one of the popular Indian gods today.
- Shudra (shoo'drah): often spelled "Sudra." The servant caste in India, the lowest of the four main castes. The name means "dark," and originally referred to the conquered natives of the peninsula.
- Sin: religious term for wrong-doing, particularly when conceived as opposition to God's will. Not necessarily ethical; sometimes ritualistic error.
- supernatural: religious concept of the more-than-natural power in the world, which cannot be dealt with by ordinary physical techniques. Usually implies super-human quality as well.
- Tao (dow): the harmonious way of Heaven and nature with which man should accord himself, according to Taoism.
- taboo: that which is forbidden to ordinary use because of spiritual potencies residing within it. "Marked off," as dangerous.
- Talmud: extensive body of Jewish tradition and commentary on the Torah; roughly seven centuries' accumulation, completed in 4th or 5th centuries A.D.
- theism: belief in God. Usually taken to be equivalent to monotheism, and implying divine personality, though not necessarily.
- theology: literally "the study of God," *i.e.*, systematic religious doctrines.
- Torah: Basic Jewish law; found in the first five books of the Bible.
- totem: animal or plant regarded as member, perhaps ancestor, of clan or tribe. Reverenced; eaten only on special occasions, sometimes not at all.
- trance: roughly equivalent to ecstasy (which see). Condition of being rapt "out of oneself" in meditation or ecstasy.
- transmigration of souls: equivalent to reincarnation, though it also includes disembodied state as a ghost. Hindu-Buddhist concept.
- transubstantiation: Roman Catholic doctrine that the blessing of the priest in the Mass upon the Eucharistic bread and wine changes them inwardly and metaphysically into the body and blood of Christ, though outwardly their appearance remains the same. Also held by Eastern Orthodox Catholics.
- Vaisnavite (vish'na-vite) or Vishnuite: worshiper of Vishnu (Visnu).
- Vedas (vee'dahs or vay'dahs): the four most ancient groups of Hindu scriptures, acknowledged by all orthodox groups.
- Void, the doctrine of: held by one school of Buddhists; the teaching that there is no reality of any sort, and that salvation comes in realizing this.



Wheel of Life: Buddhist concept (sometimes pictorially represented) of the causal series that produces human life. In loose sense, the rebirth cycle of perpetual reincarnation.

Zionism: a strong movement within modern Judaism favoring the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish state or homeland. (Mainly instrumental in establishing the Republic of Israel.) Named after "Zion," symbolic religious name in the Bible for Jerusalem.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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The books listed here represent in general the more available and useful volumes for the undergraduate student and general reader. No attempt is made to be exhaustive, though differences of viewpoint and range of difficulty are represented.

Books listed more than once in the same Part will be referred to as *op. cit.* under author's name; in subsequent Parts by title. The first listing will contain comments on the book, if any.

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## PART I: WHAT IS RELIGION?

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## PART II: RELIGION AS SOCIAL PATTERN

### SECTION I: HUMAN COMMUNITY AND RELIGION

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## SECTION II: RELIGIOUS NATURAL GROUPS

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Fairbanks, Arthur, *A Handbook of Greek Religion*, American Book, 1910. Chap. II, "The Worship of the Gods," deals with local ceremonial.

Farnell, L. R., *op. cit.* Chap. IV, on civic religion among the Greeks.

Kulp, D. H., *Country Life in South China*, Columbia, 1925. See Chaps. VI, X.

Lang, Olga, *op. cit.* Some material on ancestor worship in Chap. II.

Linton, Ralph, *op. cit.* Chap. XIII, on "The Local Group," treats of community life.

Murdock, George P., *Social Structure*. Chap. V, "The Community."

Nock, A. D., *Conversion*, Oxford, 1933. Chap. II discusses the worship in Greek communities.

Chapter XVI: *Racial-National Religions*I. *General*

Baron, S. W., *Modern Nationalism and Religion*, Harper, 1949. A study of religion and national groups in several contexts.

Coit, Stanton, *The Soul of America*, Macmillan, 1914. Part I, "Religion and Nationality," in particular; the book in general seeks to fuse religion and patriotism.

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Frankfort, Henri, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, Columbia University Press, 1948. All service of the Pharaoh, a god incarnate, was religious.

Steindorff, Georg, *The Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, Putnam, 1905. Lecture II, on the development of the state.

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Berger, Elmer, *A Partisan History of Judaism*, Devin-Adair, 1951. Chaps. IV, V, on the ghetto and nationalism, oppose the ethnic-nationalist interpretation of Judaism.

Buber, Martin, *Israel and the World*, Schocken Books, 1948. Chap. IV, same title, critically discusses Jewish nationalism.

Isaacs, Abram S., *What is Judaism?* Putnam, 1912. A compact, spirited defense of Jewish peoplehood and religious mission.

Joseph, Morris, *Judaism as Creed and Life*, Macmillan, 1903. Book I, Chap. X, on Israel's mission; Book III, Chaps. XII, XIII on respective religious and state obligations.

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Zangwill, Israel, *Chosen Peoples: The Hebraic versus the Teutonic*, Macmillan, 1919.

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Aston, W. G., *Shinto, the Way of the Gods*, Longmans, 1905. Reliable standard work. Chap. III deals with the deification of men, including the emperor.

Ballou, Robert O., *Shinto, the Unconquered Enemy*, Viking, 1945. More impartial than the title. Chaps. III, VIII deal with the people-emperor relation.

Holtom, D. C., *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism*, University of Chicago, 1943. Survey of historical development and expression of religious nationalism in Japan.

Mason, J. W. T., *The Meaning of Shinto*, Dutton, 1935. Sympathetic; plays down religious-nationalistic quality of Japanese life.

## SECTION III: CHURCH AND RITUAL DEVELOPMENT

### Chapter XVII: *The Distinctive Religious Society*

#### I. *The Role of Leader (Founder) and Disciple*

Burrows, Millar, *Founders of Great Religions*, Scribner, 1931. Readable and reliable portraits.



- Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, article "Ananda" (I, 419), on the favorite disciple of Buddha.
- Faris, Ellsworth, *The Nature of Human Nature*, McGraw, 1937. Pp. 49 ff., importance of independent initiative of the religious leader.
- Jackson, A. V. W., *Zoroaster*, Macmillan, 1899.
- Stevenson, Margaret, *The Heart of Jainism*, Oxford, 1915. Chap. V, on the role of the religious leader in Jainism.
- Streeter, B. H., *The Primitive Church*, Macmillan, 1929. Chaps. II, V, on the activities of early Christian disciples.
- Thomas, Joseph, *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History*, Knopf, 1927.
- Wach, Joachim, *op. cit.* Chap. VIII, "Religious Authority," discusses various types of religious leaders, priest, prophet, etc.

## II. *Mystery Religions*

- Angus, S., *The Mystery-Religions and Christianity*, Scribner, 1925. Full-scale, competent study of effect of Greek mysteries on Christianity.
- Farnell, L. R., *The Cults of the Greek States*, 5 vols., Oxford, 1907. Vol. III, pp. 126-212, on the Eleusinian mysteries. Verbose, but full of concrete detail.
- Macchiore, Vittorio D., *From Orpheus to Paul*, Holt, 1930. Development of Greek mysteries and relation to St. Paul's thought.
- Murray, Gilbert, *The Four Stages of Greek Religion*, Columbia University, 1912. Chap. III, "The Failure of Nerve," discussion of role of mystery cults in late Greek culture.
- Nock, A. D., *op. cit.* Chaps. I-VIII give an imaginative, authoritative discussion of pre-Christian and early Christian group life.
- Rohde, Erwin, *Psyche*, Harcourt, Brace, 1925. A classic study of Greek religious culture. See Chaps. VI, IX, X, on the mysteries.

## III. *Hindu and Buddhist Religious Sects and Reforms*

- Bell, Charles, *The Religion of Tibet*, Oxford, 1931. Pp. 95 ff. deal with reform movements in Tibetan Buddhism.
- Eliot, Sir Charles, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, 2 vols. Comprehensive, authoritative. See especially Vol. II, Chaps. XXV, XXVI, on Hindu sects.
- *Japanese Buddhism*, Arnold, 1935. Book III, Chaps. X, XI, good description of Japanese sects.
- Farquhar, John N., *Modern Religious Movements in India*, Macmillan, 1915.
- Hopkins, E. W., *Religions of India*, Ginn, 1895. Chap. XVII has an account of modern Hindu sects.
- Pratt, James B., *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism*, Macmillan, 1928. Two chapters on Nichiren Buddhism and on "Sects and Clergy."
- Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*, 2 vols., Allen & Unwin, 1927. Outstanding volumes on Indian philosophy. See Vol. II, pp. 659-672, on Ramanuja, a Hindu reformer and sect founder.

Stevenson, Margaret, *Rites of the Twice-Born*. Chaps. XIV on Shiva worship, XV on Vishnu worship.

#### IV. *Christian Developments*

##### A. *Interpretations of the "Church"*

Adam, Karl, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, Macmillan, 1931. An excellent nonpolemical Catholic interpretation of the Church.

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Flew, R. Newton, *The Nature of the Church*, Harper, 1952. Twenty-five Protestant denominational representatives give their interpretations.

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Lindsay, Thomas M., *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, Zondervan, 1924. A history and Protestant interpretation of the "primitive" conception of the Church.

Morrison, Charles C., *The Unfinished Reformation*. See chapter comparing Catholic and Protestant unity.

Tillich, Paul, *The Religious Situation*, Holt, 1932. Protestantism viewed as a "perpetual" protest against an authoritarian Church.

##### B. *Growth and Development of the Church*

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Case, Shirley Jackson, *The Social Triumph of the Ancient Church*, Harper, 1933. The early church in terms of its penetration of Roman society.

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Flick, A. C., *The Rise of the Medieval Church*, Putnam, 1909. Chap. XI, good discussion of monasticism.

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Merton, Thomas, *The Waters of Siloe*, Harcourt, Brace, 1949. Contemporary Trappist monk writes on the place of monasticism in the modern world. See Prologue, Note, and Chap. I.

Nock, A. D., *op. cit.* Chap. XII, "Spread of Christianity."

Underhill, Evelyn, *Worship*. Chaps. XI–XV deal with development of the Christian patterns of worship.

Walker, Williston, *A History of the Christian Church*, Scribner, 1918. A good, balanced one-volume history.

### C. *Reaction, Reformation, Sectarianism*

(See appropriate sections in histories above; also Tillich, Morrison, and Knox references. See also references, Chapters VIII and X, to Christian sectarian differences.)

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Lindsay, Thomas M., *A History of the Reformation*, Scribner, 1907. (Also in International Theological Library.)

Mackinnon, James, *The Origins of the Reformation*, Longmans, Green, 1939.

Morrison, Charles C., *Can Protestantism Win America?* Chaps. IX, X, on the sectarian weakness of American Protestantism.

Troeltsch, Ernst, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols., Allen & Unwin, 1931. See Vol. I, pp. 328–78, on the development of sects. Vol. II defines Protestant church; pp. 691–728, on varieties of contemporary sects.

Van Dyke, Paul, *Ignatius Loyola: The Founder of the Jesuits*, Scribner, 1927. Chap. IX, founding of the Order, for Catholic counter-reformation.

## Chapter XVIII: *The Religious Group as a Ritual Unity*

### I. *Primitive Myth and Ritual*

Gaster, Theodor, and Murray, Gilbert, *Thespis; Ritual, Myth, and Drama*, Schuman, 1950. Best new study of the mythical-dramatic quality of religion in some of its more primitive forms.

Harrison, Jane, *Ancient Art and Ritual*. Artistic-ritualistic forms of Greek religion.

Hocart, A. M., *Kingship*, Oxford, 1927. A classic study of myth and ritual surrounding mid-East rulers.

Hooke, S. H., ed., *The Labyrinth*, Oxford, 1937.

—*Myth and Ritual*, Oxford, 1933. Excellent studies in primitive mythology and ritual, viewed as functional parts of each other.

James, E. O., *Origins of Sacrifice*, Murray, 1937. Compact, popular treatment, but reliable.

- Beginnings of Religion*. Chaps. IV–VII discuss cult and ritual practices in specific situations.
- Levy-Bruhl, Lucien, *How Natives Think*. Pp. 368–74 deal with primitive myth.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw, *Myth in Primitive Psychology*, Norton, 1926. (Also in Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion*. A perceptive study in the function of myth among primitives (Trobrianders).)
- Marett, R. R., *Head, Heart, and Hands in Human Evolution*. Chaps. VII, VIII deal with ritualism as a “disease” of religion.
- The Threshold of Religion*. See Chap. II, “From Spell to Prayer.”
- Radin, Paul, *Social Anthropology*. Parts V, VI deal with mythology and ritual.
- Raglan, Lord, *The Hero* (Thinkers Library), Watt, 1949. Part II, “Myth,” a suggestive discussion.
- Tylor, E. B., *Primitive Culture*. Vol. I, Chaps. VIII–X on mythology. Older, somewhat discredited views, but inclusive of much detail.

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- de Groot, J. J. M., *Religion in China*, Putnam, 1912. Chap. V contains detailed description of ancient state ritual.
- Shryock, John K., *The Origin and Development of the State Cult of Confucius, Century*, 1932.

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- Finkelstein, Louis, *The Religions of Democracy*, Devin-Adair, 1946. Part I, “Beliefs and Practices of Judaism.”
- Hertz, Joseph H., *Authorized Jewish Prayerbook*, Bloch, 1948. Both Hebrew and English version; ritual prayers for all occasions.
- Idelsohn, Abraham Z., *The Ceremonies of Judaism*, National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods, 1930. Short, illuminating descriptions of major Jewish ceremonies.
- Joseph, Morris, *op. cit.* Book II, “Ceremonial,” including Chap. IV on the Passover.
- Moore, G. F., *Judaism*. Vol. II, Part IV, “Observances.”
- Underhill, Evelyn, *Worship*. Chap. X, on Jewish worship.

## IV. Psychological, Sociological Value of Ritual

- Fromm, Erich, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, Yale, 1950. Pp. 106 ff. deal with the psychological value of ritualism.
- Pratt, James B., *The Religious Consciousness*. Chaps. XII–XIV deal with the psychological basis for ritualism.
- (Also many scattered passages in books on primitive ritual.)



Chapter XIX: *Ritual Development*

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Russell, Elbert, *The History of Quakerism*, Macmillan, 1942.

Underhill, Evelyn, *Worship*. Chaps. II, III, IV, VII, IX, XI deal extendedly and competently with the nature and development of Christian worship forms, and their private practice.

*Venite Adoremus* (World Student Christian Federation Hymnal), Agents, Herder Book Co. Contains some portions of Orthodox liturgy.

## PART III: RELIGION AS SALVATION

## SECTION I: ORIENTATION

Chapter XX: *What Is Salvation?*

Bennett, John, *Social Salvation*. Contemporary Christian attempt to define salvation in societal terms.

Braden, Charles S., *Man's Quest for Salvation*, Clark, 1940. The best single study, on a survey level, of the meaning of salvation in different religions.

Dewey, John, *The Quest for Certainty*, Balch, 1929. Chap. I delineates general hazardous, uncertain condition of man, *i.e.*, as needing salvation.

Roberts, David E., *Psychotherapy and a Christian View of Man*, Scribner, 1950. Chaps. VIII, IX discuss "static" and "dynamic" salvation.

## SECTION II: CLASSIC PATTERNS OF SALVATION

Chapter XI: *The Way of Works: Law, Sacrament, Morality*I. *General*

Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Westminster. Book III discusses extendedly the faith-works antithesis. See Chaps. II, XI, XV, XVIII in particular.

*Catholic Encyclopedia*. Articles on "Sacraments" (XIII) and "Merit" (X) for Catholic statement.

Luther, Martin, *Three Treatises*, Muhlenberg, 1943. "A Treatise on Christian Liberty" calls for faith instead of works.

*New Testament: The Letter of James*. Chap. II discusses faith versus works.

—*The Letter of Paul to the Galatians* declares faith is better than works.

## II. Hinduism

Eliot, Sir Charles, *Hinduism and Buddhism*. See all references to *Laws of Manu* and caste.

*Laws of Manu*, Vol. XXV, *Sacred Books of the East*, *passim*.

Pratt, James B., *India and its Faiths*. On caste, pp. 120–7, 169–73.

Radhakrishnan, S., *The Hindu View of Life*. Lecture IV contains a defense of caste.

Stevenson, Margaret, *Rites of the Twice-Born*, *passim*.

—*Without the Pale*, Oxford, 1931. The story of an outcaste girl.

## III. Islam

Gibb, H. A. R., *Modern Trends in Islam*, University of Chicago, 1947. Chaps. I, V, on Moslem thought, law, and society.

Massé, Henri, *Islam*, Putnam, 1938. Chaps. III, IV, on the relation of law to religion.

## IV. Puritanism

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—and Johnson, T. H., *The Puritans*, American Book, 1938. Introd. well characterizes the Puritan spirit.

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Wertenbaker, T. J., *The Puritan Oligarchy*, Scribner, 1947. See Chaps. II–IV, on morals and manners.

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## V. Judaism

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Kohler, K., *Jewish Theology*. Part III contains well-stated treatment of Israel as priest-people to lead the world to holiness.

Neuman, Abraham A., "Judaism" in Jurji, *The Great Religions of the Modern World*, is a summary of Jewish differentia.



VI. *Roman Catholicism*

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Ross, J. Elliott, discussion of Roman Catholicism in Finkelstein's *The Religions of Democracy*.

Chapter XXII: *The Way of Devotion*I. *Hinduism*

Müller, Max, *Ramakrishna: His Life and Sayings*, Longmans, Green, 1910. Extensive collection of Ramakrishna's parable sayings.

Otto, Rudolf, *India's Religions of Grace*, Student Christian Movement, 1930. Comparison of Hindu and Christian love.

Pratt, James B., *India and its Faiths*. Pp. 177-184 discuss the Ramakrishna movement.

Radhakrishnan, S., ed., *History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western*, 2 vols., Allen & Unwin, 1942. Vol. I, Chap. IV, by S. K. De, treats of *Bhagavad-gita* and bhakti cults.

—*Indian Philosophy*. Vol. I, Chap. IX, "The Theism of the Bhagavadgita."

Ramakrishnananda, Swami, *Message of Eternal Wisdom*, Madras, Math, 1938. An interpretation of Ramakrishna by one of his disciples. Discussion of bhakti, pp. 75-87.

Vivekananda, Swami, *Complete Works*. Vol. III deals with "Bhakti-Yoga"; Vol. IV, account of "My Master," i.e., Ramakrishna, pp. 150-183.

Wieman, H. N., and Horton, W. M., *The Growth of Religion*. Pp. 47-60. Hindu devotional sects.

II. *Amida Buddhism*

Eliot, Sir Charles, *Japanese Buddhism*, Arnold, 1935. See chapter on Amidism.

Pratt, James B., *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism*. Chap. XXXI, Nichiren and Amida Buddhism.

III. *Christianity*A. *Love*

(A basic theme in Christian teaching. Only a very few presentations suggested here.)

Aulén, Gustaf, *The Faith of the Christian Church*, Muhlenberg, 1948. Pp. 120-159 portray God as overflowing love to men.

Brunner, Emil, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, Westminster, 1950. Chapter XV: "God is Love."

DeWolf, L. Harold, *A Theology of the Living Church*, Harper, 1953. Section on "The Holiness, Righteousness and Love of God."

Kagawa, Toyohiko, *Love, the Law of Life*, Winston, 1929. Japanese Christian application of love to all relationships.

St. Teresa, *Complete Works*, 3 vols., Sheed & Ward, 1949. Vol. II contains "Conceptions of the Love of God," after the medieval mystic pattern.

#### B. *Saintliness*

Inge, W. R., *Types of Christian Saintliness*, Longmans, Green, 1915. Brief and insightful.

James, William, *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Chaps. XI–XV, psychological portrait of medieval Catholic saintliness.

#### C. *St. Francis and John Wesley*

Bradford, Gamaliel, *Saints and Sinners*, Houghton Mifflin, 1932. Essay, "God's Vagabond," a brief psychological portrait.

Chesterton, Gilbert K., *St. Francis of Assisi*, new ed., Hodder & Stoughton, 1945. Vigorous, popular style.

Jones, Rufus, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, Macmillan, 1919. Chap. IX deals with St. Francis, interpreting him as a mystic.

*Journal* (of John Wesley), Nehemiah Curnock abridgement, Abingdon-Cokesbury (reprint), 1938.

*The Little Flowers of St. Francis* (Everyman, No. 485), Dutton, 1947. Classic anecdotes of Francis' thought and life. Also contains St. Bonaventure's *Life of St. Francis*.

McConnell, F. J., *John Wesley*, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1939.

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Taylor, Henry Osborn, *The Medieval Mind*, Macmillan, 1911. Vol. I, Chap. XVIII, devoted to St. Francis.

#### D. *Revivals and Conversions*

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Bradford, Gamaliel, *D. L. Moody, a Worker in Souls*, Doran, 1927. Psychological portrait of a great Protestant evangelist.

Davenport, Frederick M., *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*, Macmillan, 1905. An early but still valuable study of revival behavior and psychology.

Hall, G. Stanley, *Adolescence*, 2 vols., Appleton, 1904. Pp. 281–362, discussion of conversion as an adolescent phenomenon.

James, William, *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Chaps. IX, X on conversion.

Miller, Perry, *Jonathan Edwards*. See chapter on "Revivalism."

Pratt, James B., *The Religious Consciousness*. Chaps. VII–IX analyze conversions of different psychological types.

Robert, Archie, *That Old-Time Religion*, Houghton Mifflin, 1950. Popularized account of personal contact with American revivalistic faith.

Russell, Arthur J., *For Sinners Only*, Harper, 1932. This and Shoemaker volume



- below are presentations of the personal evangelism of the Oxford Groupers (Buchmanites).
- Shoemaker, Samuel M., Jr., *Children of the Second Birth*, Revell, 1927.
- Sweet, William W., *Religion on the American Frontier*, University of Chicago. Vol. I, *The Baptists*, 1931. Chaps. III, IV, on revival preachers and churches. Vol. II, *The Presbyterians*, 1936. Chap. IV, "Revivalism and Presbyterian Controversy." Vol. IV, *The Methodists*, 1946. Chap. IV, on Methodist camp meetings.
- Revivalism in America*, Scribner, 1944. A connected account of revivalism from colonial times to the present.
- Story of Religion in America* (rev.), Harper, 1949. Chaps. IX, X, XV deal with revival "awakenings."
- Underwood, A. C., *Conversion: Christian and Non-Christian*, Allen & Unwin, 1925. Chap. XV deals with revivals.

### Chapter XXIII: *The Way of Knowledge: Mystical Insight*

#### I. *Mysticism in General*

- Bennett, Charles A., *A Philosophical Study of Mysticism*, Yale, 1933. The mystic is a problem-solver, not a sick man.
- Bergson, Henri, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Holt, 1935. Vital (mystical) religion is dynamic; institutional (theological) religion is static.
- Heiler, Friedrich, *Prayer*. Chaps. VI–VIII treat of mystical prayer as contrasted with prophetic.
- Herman, E., *The Meaning and Value of Mysticism*, Pilgrim, 1916. Critical but impartial philosophic and psychological study.
- Huxley, Aldous, *The Perennial Philosophy*, Harper, 1945. Mystical anthology, with comment. Thesis: mysticism is the true universal religion.
- James, William, *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Chaps. XVI–XVII, sympathetic psychological studies of mysticism.
- Jones, Rufus, *New Studies in Mystical Religion*, Macmillan, 1928. Sympathetic study by a Quaker; includes discussion of mystical abnormalities.
- Lehman, E., *Mysticism in Heathendom and Christendom*, Luzac, 1910. Good general survey of mysticism in all major religions.
- Leuba, James H., *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism*, Harcourt, Brace, 1925. Highly critical; regards mysticism as somewhat abnormal and illusory.
- Macintosh, D. C., *The Problem of Religious Knowledge*, Harper, 1940. Chaps. II, III present a philosophical analysis of mystical knowledge.
- Montague, W. P., *The Ways of Knowing*, Macmillan, 1925. Chap. II on "Mysticism" sees it as intuitive, creative.
- Pratt, James B., *The Religious Consciousness*. Chaps. XVI–XX, an excellent discussion of the varied degrees and types of mystical experience.
- Russell, Bertrand, *Mysticism and Logic*, Longmans, Green, 1918. Essay by same title discusses useful but often mistaken function of intuition.

Underhill, Evelyn, *Mysticism*, Methuen, 1949. Best general book on mysticism; sympathetic; psychological approach. See Part II for a description of stages in the mystic way.

—*Practical Mysticism*, Dutton, 1915. Mysticism is the normal religious attitude.

## II. *Buddhist Mysticism*

Braden, Charles S., *Man's Quest for Salvation*. Chap. IV contains a good discussion of Buddhist mystical techniques.

*Buddhism in Translations*. Chap. IV, on meditation and Nirvana, especially pp. 74-79.

Das Gupta, S. N., *History of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 270 ff. deal with the Yoga meditation technique, probably incorporated by early Buddhism.

Davids, Mrs. Rhys, *Buddhism* (Home University Library, No. 44) Holt, n.d. General discussion of Buddhist salvation techniques in "Quest of the Ideal."

—trans. and ed., *Psalms of the Brethren* and *Psalms of the Sisters*. These collections of poems, with comment, give good pictures of experiences.

Eliot, Sir Charles, *Japanese Buddhism*. Pp. 40-46, brief discussion of Eightfold Path.

Pratt, James B., *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism*. Chap. IV, description of Buddhist technique, discounting highly specialized quality.

Radhakrishnan, S., *History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western*. See references to *mokṣa* and Nirvana in Vol. I.

—*Indian Philosophy*. Vol. I, pp. 440-461, 600-605, deal with Nirvana.

Thomas, E. J., *The History of Buddhist Thought*, Knopf, 1933. Good chapters: IV on Yoga; IX on Karma; X on release and Nirvana.

Vallée de Poussin, L. de la, *The Way to Nirvana*, Cambridge, 1917. Classic little study of Buddhist trance experience.

## III. *Other non-Christian Mysticism*

Arnold, T., and Guillaume, A., *The Legacy of Islam*, Oxford, 1931. See chapter "Mysticism," by R. A. Nicholson.

Das Gupta, S., *Hindu Mysticism*, Open Court, 1927. A fine small-scale study of the pervasive mystical quality of all Indian religion.

—*A History of Indian Philosophy*. Vol. I, Chap. IV, discusses basic Hindu viewpoints on man and salvation in varied schools of thought.

Deussen, Paul, *The System of the Vedanta*, Open Court, 1912. A useful volume of organized source materials and interpretation. See Part V, on "Moksha or the Teaching of Liberation" in Hinduism.

de Groot, J. J. M., *Religion in China*, Putnam, 1912. Chaps. II, IV contain good material on Taoist mysticism.

Lehman, E., *op. cit.* Lists Moslem mysticism as Persian.



- Otto, Rudolf, *Mysticism, East and West*, Macmillan, 1932. Excellent comparison of Christian-Hindu types, using Eckhart and Shankara as types. See Chap. II, "Way of Knowledge," especially.
- Radhakrishnan, S., *History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western*. Vol. I, Chap. III, on "The Upanishads," by T. M. P. Mahadevan, discusses Hindu *mokṣa* or salvation.
- *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, Chap. I, is a discussion of the general Indian religious philosophical viewpoint as primarily subjective. See also Vol. II, pp. 311–316, 634–658, 703–712, on salvation.
- Scholem, G. G., *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (rev.), Schocken Books, 1946. First lecture on general characteristics of Jewish mysticism, excellent.

#### IV. *Christian Mysticism and Mystical Writings*

##### A. *Mysticism*

- Hersch, Virginia, *Woman Under Glass, St. Teresa of Avila*, Harper, 1930.
- Hügel, Friedrich von, *The Mystical Element of Religion*, 2 vols., Dutton, 1909. Extensive study of mysticism, in terms of St. Catherine of Genoa.
- Inge, W. R., *Studies in English Mysticism*, Dutton, 1906. Mysticism widely interpreted to include Browning and Wordsworth. Introd., on psychology of mysticism.
- *Christian Mysticism*, Scribner, 1899. A clear, balanced discussion of Christian differentia.
- Jones, Rufus, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, Macmillan, 1919. Studies of notable mystics of 13th–14th century Europe.
- More, Paul Elmer, *The Catholic Faith*. In chapter "Christian Mysticism" he views mysticism as a disease of religion.
- Seeshold, Anna G., *Friends of God*, Columbia, 1934. Discussion of a group of 14th century mystics in Europe.

##### B. *Mystical Writings*

(A few of the recent republications of old mystical works.)

- Blakeney, Raymond B., *Meister Eckhart*, Harper, 1941.
- Cloud of Unknowing*, anonymous, Harper, 1948. Shortened edition of medieval work.
- Hobhouse, Stephen, *Selected Mystical Writings of William Law*, Harper, 1948. English mystic. Also some selections from Jacob Boehme, German mystic.
- Ruysbroek, Jan van, *The Spiritual Espousals*, Harper, 1953. Fourteenth century Flemish mystic.
- St. Teresa, *Complete Works*. Vol. I, autobiographical account of mystical experiences. Vol. II contains "Interior Castle," a discussion of mystical life.
- Thomas à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*. Any edition.

## PART IV: RELIGION AS QUESTION AND ANSWER

## SECTION I: QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING

Chapter XXIV: *The Life of the Mind in Religion*

- Bergson, Henri, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. See section on "Myth in Religion."
- Bevan, Edwin, *Symbolism and Belief* (Gifford Lectures), Macmillan, 1938.
- Campbell, Joseph, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Bollingen Series No. 17), Pantheon Books, 1949. See prologue and epilogue on myth-making.
- Cassirer, Ernst, *An Essay on Man*, Yale, 1945. Chap. VII, "Myth and Religion," set in context of general discussion of human use of language.
- *Language and Myth*, Harper, 1946. Logic frees man from mythical language and thought forms.
- Chase, Richard, *Quest for Myth*, Louisiana State University, 1949. Myth-making fundamental, essential human activity that enables man to break his mental barriers.
- Ferré, Nels F. S., *Faith and Reason*. See especially Chap. I and Appendix, on relation of faith to reason in religion.
- Frankfort, Henri, and others, *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, University of Chicago, 1947. Chap. XII, "Emancipation of Thought from Myth," sees science as liberating man from religious "mythopoeic" thought forms.
- Frank, Erich, *Philosophical Understanding and Religious Truth*, Oxford, 1945. Excellent. Chapters on "Truth and Imagination," "Letter and Spirit," deal with philosophy's task of genuinely reconciling religion and science in honest intellectual terms.
- Haldane, J. B. S., *Possible Worlds*, Harper, 1928. Essay "Science and Theology as Art Forms" suggests that religious and scientific languages are each subjectively chosen patterns.
- James, E. O., *Social Function of Religion*. Chap. II, on the function of myth in religion.
- Kierkegaard, Søren, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Swenson, trans.), Princeton, 1944. See pp. 183–204 for his statement of the paradoxical and absurd in Christianity. Difficult.
- Langer, Susanne K., *Philosophy in a New Key*, Harvard, 1942; Pelican Books, 1948. Stimulating discussion of religious symbolism in chapter on "Reason, Rite, and Art."
- Pratt, James B., *Can We Keep the Faith?* Yale, 1941. Chap. IV discusses the Christian difficulty with classic but outworn (?) symbols.
- Reik, Theodor, *Dogma and Compulsion*, International University, 1951. See suggestive essay "Man the Myth-Maker."
- Santayana, George, *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, Scribner, 1927. Chap. I, on understanding; IV, on the poetry of Christian dogma.



- *Reason in Religion*, Life of Reason Series, No. III. Chaps. IV, VIII, XV. General viewpoint: religious language is imaginative poetry, not factual statement.
- Tillich, Paul, *Systematic Theology*, University of Chicago, 1951. Vol. I, pp. 56 ff., 150 ff., deal with religious paradox; pp. 238–47 with symbols. Abstract but suggestive.
- Wedel, Theodore, *The Christianity of Main Street*, Macmillan, 1950. An Anglican protest against watered-down Christianity; return to great creedal symbols urged.
- Weiss, Paul, *Nature and Man*, Holt, 1947. Chap. IX, on signs and language.
- Whitehead, A. N., *Symbolism*, Macmillan, 1922. Brief discussion of general subject. In particular Part III deals with the function of the symbol.

## SECTION II: FOUR BASIC QUESTIONS AND THEIR ANSWERS

Chapter XXV: *Whence Do We Come?*

Chapter XXVII: *What Is Man and Whither Is He Bound?*

### I. Origins

#### A. The Physical World and Man

##### 1. Religious Accounts

(For general references see *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, "Cosmogony.")

##### a. Hebrew-Christian

The Old Testament: Genesis 1–3.

Classical Christian writings:

Aquinas, Thomas, *Summa Theologica*. Questions 64–74, 90–93. Found in *Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Vol. I, Anton Pegis, ed., Random House, 1945, as well as in other eds. Extended question-answer discussions of creation.

Origen *De Principiis*, Book II, Chaps. I–III; Book III, Chap. V, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Roberts and Donaldson, Scribner, 1905.

Kohler, K., *Jewish Theology*. Chaps. IV, XXV.

##### b. Hindu

Deussen, Paul, *The System of the Vedanta*. Chap. II, on "Cosmology."

*Laws of Manu*, Chap. I, on the creation of the world and castes.

Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*. Vol. II, pp. 165–173, 266–277, 459 ff., 697–702.

##### c. Moslem

The *Koran* (Qur'an). Sura xxxv; xiii:1–3; xvi:3; 1:37.

d. *Shinto*

*The Sacred Scriptures of the Japanese*, Post Wheeler, ed. Introd., pp. xxxvii-xlvi; pp. 1-23.

e. *Zoroastrian*

Dawson, Miles M., *The Ethical Religion of Zoroaster*, Macmillan, 1931. Chap. VI, a selection of creation texts from Zoroastrian scriptures.

2. *Scientific Accounts*a. *The Earth*

Allen, Frank, *The Universe*, Harcourt, Brace, 1931. A history of successive ideas of the universe and its origin.

Brownell, Baker, *The New Universe*, Van Nostrand, 1926. Book I, "The World as Scientific Fact."

Gamow, George, *Biography of the Earth*, Pelican-Mentor, 1948.

Hoyle, Fred, *The Nature of the Universe*, Harper, 1951. A stimulating, speculative account of ultimate world origins by an astronomer.

Jeans, Sir James H., *The Mysterious Universe*, Macmillan, 1932.

—*The Stars in their Courses*, Cambridge, 1932.

—*The Universe Around Us*, Macmillan, 1939. Each of these contains a chapter or two on the origin and antiquity of the earth.

Lull, R. S., and others, *The Evolution of the Earth and its Inhabitants*, Yale, 1918. Different aspects discussed by scientists from varied fields.

Thomson, J. A., *Concerning Evolution*, Yale, 1923. Part I, "Making the World."

b. *Origin and Development of Life, Including Man*

Baitsell, George A., ed., *The Evolution of Man*, Yale, 1922. Standard biological accounts.

Clark, Wilfred E., *Early Forerunners of Man*, Wood, 1934. Traces the anthropoid heritage of man.

Gregory, William K., *Man's Place among the Anthropoids*, Oxford, 1934.

—*Our Face from Fish to Man*, Putnam, 1929. Zoological evidences of human evolution.

Hooton, Earnest A., *Up from the Apes*, Macmillan, 1931. Ad-libbing but dependable account.

McCurdy, George, *The Coming of Man*, University Society, 1932 (Condensation of larger work, *Human Origins*, 2 vols.)

Osborne, Henry F., *The Origin and Evolution of Life*, Scribner, 1917.

—*The Earth Speaks to Bryan*, Scribner, 1925. Growing out of the Tennessee evolution trial.

Simpson, George G., *The Meaning of Evolution*, Pelican-Mentor, 1950. An excellent recent work. Chap. II, "The Beginning of Life."

Wilder, Harris J., *The Pedigree of the Human Race*, Holt, 1926.



3. *Interpretations: Scientific, Philosophical, Religious*a. *Origins*

- Boodin, John E., *Three Interpretations of the Universe*, Macmillan, 1934. A "cosmic evolutionist" discusses the Hebrew-Christian tradition of creation sympathetically but critically, Chaps. X, XI.
- Frank, Erich, *op. cit.* Chap. III, a philosophical discussion of creation and time.
- Henderson, Lawrence, *The Fitness of the Environment*, Macmillan, 1913. The earth process is "aimed" at producing life; written by a biochemist.
- Inge, W. R., *God and the Astronomers*, Longmans, Green, 1933. Philosophical discussion of the development of creation theories in the Christian tradition, Chap. VI. Competent, clear.
- Jennings, H. S., *The Universe and Life*, Yale, 1933. A biologist's interpretation of the relation of cosmic process and life; brief, clear.
- Lodge, Sir Oliver, *Evolution and Creation*, Doran, 1926. Popularized, somewhat romantic discussion of the harmonization of creation and evolution theories.
- Mason, Frances, ed., *Creation by Evolution*, Macmillan, 1928. Essays by scientists on the creative advance of life on earth.
- Niebuhr, Reinhold, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. Vol. I, pp. 131-36, deal with creation account in Bible.
- Pringle-Pattison, A. Seth, *The Idea of God*, Oxford, 1917. A clear, cogent volume. Discussion of creation as continuous in Chap. XVI.
- Webb, C. C. J., *God and Personality*, Allen & Unwin, 1918. Chapter on "The Problem of Creation."

II. *The Meaning of Evolution*

- Barnes, Ernest W., *Scientific Theory and Religion* (Gifford Lectures), Macmillan, 1933. Lectures XII-XVI on evolutionary development, by a scientifically well-versed theologian-philosopher. Some parts technical; most, readable and stimulating.
- Bergson, Henri, *Creative Evolution* (Arthur Mitchell, trans.), Holt, 1911. Evolution results from the push of a progressive "élan vital."
- Bertocci, Peter, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, Prentice-Hall, 1951. Chap. VII gives a lucid discussion of views of modern evolutionists.
- Boodin, John E., *Cosmic Evolution*, Macmillan, 1925. Part II, on "emergence," discusses the arising of life and intelligence out of cosmic process. Rather diffuse.
- Bradley, J. H., *Patterns of Survival*, Macmillan, 1938. Chaps. X, XI discuss man as an "oddity" in nature.
- Conklin, E. G., *The Direction of Evolution*, Scribner, 1922. Evolutionary trends as seen by a biologist.
- Drummond, Henry, *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, Pott, 1888. Example of harmonistic efforts toward evolutionary teaching by an American theologian.

- Greenwood, William O., *Biology and Christian Belief*, Macmillan, 1939. A biologist, friendly to religion, states his views.
- Haldane, J. S., *Mechanism, Life, and Personality*, Dutton, 1914. A biologist, somewhat influenced by "vitalism," rejects mechanism as an explanation.
- Heard, Gerald, *Is God Evident?* Harper, 1948. A very ingenious and suggestive argument for purposive advance in evolution.
- Henderson, Lawrence, *The Order of Nature*, Harvard, 1917. Nature shows signs of "purposive" organization, though in a carefully restricted, nonconscious sense.
- Hobhouse, Leonard T., *Development and Purpose*, Macmillan, 1913. A carefully reasoned interpretation of evolution as a purposive process, Chaps. V, VI, VIII.
- Huxley, Julian S., *Evolution, the Modern Synthesis*, Allen & Unwin, 1942. Evolution has produced intelligent, social man, but is not purposive.
- *Man in the Modern World*, Mentor, 1948. A stimulating essay on "The Uniqueness of Man."
- Lecomte de Noüy, Pierre, *Human Destiny*, Longmans, Green, 1947. Evolution is a guided climb to spiritual levels. By a scientist turned philosopher.
- Loeb, Jaques, *The Mechanistic Conception of Life*, University of Chicago, 1912.
- Matthews, W. R., *The Purpose of God*, Scribner, 1936. Argument from design, criticized, restated.
- Morgan, C. Lloyd, *Emergent Evolution*, Williams & Norgate, 1923.
- *Life, Mind and Spirit*, Holt, 1925. These volumes see evolution as a process in which mind and spirit "emerge."
- Noble, Edmund, *Purposive Evolution*, Holt, 1926. Subtitle: "The Link Between Science and Religion."
- Pringle-Pattison, A. Seth, *op. cit.* Chap. XVII deals with purpose as a cosmic element.
- Reiser, Oliver L., *The Promise of Scientific Humanism*, Piess, 1940. Chaps. XII–XIV, mechanistic and chemical interpretations of life process.
- Sherrington, Charles S., *Man on His Nature*, Cambridge, 1940. Recognition of the uniqueness of human intelligence, but denial of over-all design. See Chaps. X–XII.
- Simpson, G. G., *op. cit.* Chaps. IX, XII recognize purposes but no purpose in evolution. Emphasis on social factor in human evolution.
- Simpson, James Y., *The Spiritual Interpretation of Nature*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1912. Chap. XI argues for a "directive factor in evolution."
- Smuts, Jan C., *Holism and Evolution*, Macmillan, 1926. Evolution is an ascending series of integrated wholes.
- Temple, Wm., *Nature, Man and God*, Macmillan, 1940. Chap. XIX discusses the relation of the "material" and "spiritual." Pp. 52 f. suggest that a mechanical universe implies a creative mind.
- Thomson, J. A., *op. cit.* Parts II, III seek to reconcile scientific and religious views of evolution.



—*Riddles of Science*, Liveright, 1932. Chap. I, on the beginning of life; XIV–LII, on evolution and purpose. Discussion of problematic aspects.

### III. *The Nature and Destiny of Man*

(See also relevant passages in II, above.)

#### A. *What Is Man?*

##### 1. *Empirically Considered*

###### a. *Biologically*

(See above Huxley, Conklin, Sherrington, Simpson, G. G.)

Calhoun, Robert, *What is Man?* (Hazen Series), Association Press, n.d. Chap. II on the biological view of man, by a theologian. Popular in style.

Conklin, E. G., *Man, Real and Ideal*, Scribner, 1943. A biologist is critical of many idealistic statements about man, but not of human ideals.

Hooton, Earnest, *The Twilight of Man*, Putnam, 1939. Tongue-in-cheek yet serious essays on human biological degeneration.

Kahn, Fritz, *Man in Structure and Function*, Knopf, 1943.

Needham, Joseph, *Man a Machine*, Norton, 1928. Critical reaction to romanticized man. Necessity for science to study man as mechanism.

Pearl, Raymond, *Man the Animal*, Principia, 1946.

###### b. *Psychologically*

Allport, Gordon, *Personality*, Holt, 1937. Chaps. I, IV, VI, VII present a personalistic, integrative viewpoint.

Calhoun, Robert, *op. cit.* Chap. III, on man as psychology sees him.

Fromm, Erich, *Escape from Freedom*, Farrar & Rinehart, 1941. Modern man is afraid of his freedom as a person.

Horney, Karen, *The Neurotic Personality of our Time*, Norton, 1937. Modern man is a focus of social-personal conflicts and pressures.

Hull, C. L., *Principles of Behaviour*, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1943. Behavioristic view of man as physiological organism even in mental life.

###### c. *Sociologically*

Aubrey, Edwin, *Man's Search for Himself*, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1940. Chap. III considers man as a product of his society.

Cooley, Charles H., and others, *Introductory Sociology*, Scribner, 1933. Chaps. I–IX; particularly V, "Individual and Society," and VIII on the social origination of the self.

Faris, Robert E. L., *Social Psychology*, Ronald, 1952. Chaps. I, V, VII, on the social organization of consciousness and self-consciousness.

2. *Religiously and Philosophically*a. *Confucianism*

Dubs, Homer H., *Hsüntze* (Probsthain Oriental Series, No. XV), Probsthain, 1927. Chap. VI considers human nature improvable.

*Hsüntze, Works of* (Probsthain Oriental Series, No. XVI; Homer H. Dubs, trans.), Probsthain, 1928. Chap. XXIII takes view of human nature as evil, but capable of self and social disciplining. Opposed to Mencius' interpretation of Confucius; XVI, on "Self-Cultivation."

Lin, Yu-t'ang, *The Importance of Living*, Day, 1937. Contemporary Chinese expression of optimistic Confucian humanism.

—*The Wisdom of Confucius* (Modern Library), Random House, 1943. Chaps.

III, "Central Harmony," and XI, on Mencius' confidence in human goodness.

Noss, John B., *Man's Religions*. Pp. 361–367.

b. *Buddhism*

*Buddhism in Translations*. Chap. II, see sections on "Sentient Existence" and "There is No Ego."

Thomas, E. J., *The History of Buddhist Thought*. Chap. VIII, on the soul.

c. *Hinduism*

Das Gupta, S. N., *History of Indian Philosophy*. See atman, soul, in the index.

Otto, Rudolf, *Mysticism, East and West*. Chap. VII, "Atman and Soul," contrasts Hindu and Christian concepts.

Radhakrishnan, S., *History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western*. See references to soul, atman, consciousness, and individual in index.

—*Indian Philosophy*. Vol. II, pp. 144–152, 283–287, 475–485, 595–601, 690–696 contain discussions of views of various systems of thought.

Vivekananda, Swami, *Complete Works*. Vol. II, section on "The Atman."

d. *Western (Hebrew-Christian) Personalism*(1) *Classical Christian Views*

Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Book I, Chap. XV, on man's innocence at creation; Book II, Chaps. I–III, man's fall and consequent corruption.

St. Augustine, *Basic Writings of St. Augustine*, Whitney Oates, ed., Random House, 1948. Vol. I, "On Nature and Grace," and "On Original Sin," are lengthy discussions of human nature in relation to God.

—*Confessions, passim*. Many comments about sinful human nature.

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. Questions 75 ff. *St. Thomas Aquinas on Man* is a booklet reprint of questions-answers 75–79, in Great Books Foundation, Regnery, 1951.



(2) *Philosophical Views*

Aubrey, Edwin, *op. cit.* Chap. II, on man as an individual.

Baker, Herschel, *The Dignity of Man*, Harvard, 1947. A well-organized history of Greek, Christian, and Renaissance views of man. See Chaps. XI, on Augustine's views, and XVI, on Christian humanism.

Bennett, John C., "The Christian Conception of Man," in *Liberal Theology*, by Roberts and Van Dusen, Scribner, 1942.

Bertocci, Peter, *op. cit.* Chaps. VIII-IX discuss man as a knowing, feeling, moral person.

Calhoun, Robert, *op. cit.* Chap. IV, on the religious view of man.

Hocking, W. E., *The Self: Its Body and its Freedom*, Oxford, 1928. Philosophical discussion of body-mind, mind-world relations, in general Christian tradition. — *Thoughts on Life and Death*, Harper, 1937. Contains section on "Biological Meaning of Human Life."

Hough, Lynn H., *Evangelical Humanism*, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1925. Chaps. V, VI contain a critique of non-Christian humanism.

Irwin, William A., *The Old Testament*, Schuman, 1952. Chaps. III, IV, on man and his relation to God. Excellent; reliable, clear.

Kohler, K., *Jewish Theology*. Pp. 206-60, on man.

Niebuhr, Reinhold, *The Nature and Destiny of Man. Passim*, but especially Vol. I, Chaps. I, VI-IX, on man in God's image and as sinner.

Roberts, David E., *Psychotherapy and a Christian View of Man*. Interpretation of psychotherapy in Christian terms.

Temple, William, *op. cit.* Chap. IX deals with human freedom and determinism; well argued.

Weizacker, C. F., *The History of Nature*, University of Chicago, 1949. Contains suggestive discussion of man's "outer" and "inner" history.

b. *Human Destiny*1. *Hinduism and Buddhism*

Das Gupta, S. N., *History of Indian Philosophy*. See references to *moksha* (or *mokṣa*) and rebirth.

Deussen, Paul, *op. cit.* Book V, on the transmigration of the soul; Book VI, on its deliverance and life in bliss.

Pratt, James B., *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism*. Chap. V, "Man and his Destiny," discusses general Indian and Buddhist views.

(See also bibliography for Chapter XXIII above, for Hindu and Buddhist materials on salvation, Nirvana, etc.)

2. *Jewish and Zoroastrian Views*

Dawson, Miles M., *op. cit.* Chaps. XXIX-XXXII present Zoroastrian scriptural views of the future life.

Joseph, Morris, *Judaism as Creed and Life*, Chap. IX, on the future life.

Kohler, K., *op. cit.* Chaps. XLIII–XLIV, on future life, reward, and punishment.

### 3. *Christian and Western*

(Almost every book on religion closes with a chapter on immortality. Only a few are here chosen.)

Baillie, John, *And the Life Everlasting*, Scribner, 1933. A first-rate work, well and persuasively written. Argument based on existence of God.

Bixler, J. Seelye, *Immortality and the Present Mood*, Harvard, 1931. Stimulating discussion of the difficulties of the modern mind with immortality.

DuCassee, C. J., *A Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion*, Ronald, 1953. Chap. XVII, "Life after Death," discusses the evidence of psychical research (and spiritualism) sympathetically.

Eddy, Sherwood, *You Will Survive After Death*, Rinehart, 1950. Personal and popularized account of experiences with spiritualism.

(There is a large literature on psychical research, *i.e.*, communicating with the dead. See *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, and a large array of books by Conan Doyle, Hamlin Garland, Sir Oliver Lodge, Stewart Edward White. See also William James' essay on "What Psychical Research has Accomplished" in *The Will to Believe*; Ducasse, *Is a Life After Death Possible?* University of California, 1948; and J. B. Rhine's *The Reach of the Mind*, Sloane, 1947, on extrasensory perception.)

Lyman, Eugene, *The Meaning and Truth of Religion*, Scribner, 1933. Chap. XIV, "The Human Soul, Its Freedom and Immortality."

St. Augustine, *Basic Writings*. See "On the Immortality of the Soul" in Vol. I, or same title in other editions.

Streeter, B. H., ed., *Immortality*, Macmillan, 1917. A series of essays on varied aspects by competent writers.

Temple, William, *op. cit.* Chap. XVIII discusses the moral and religious conditions of eternal life.

Tsanoff, Radoslav A., *The Problem of Immortality*, Macmillan, 1924.

Wright, William K., *A Student's Philosophy of Religion* (rev.), Macmillan, 1943. Chap. XXII deals with immortality.

### 4. *Western Humanist Views*

Burt, A. E., *Types of Religious Philosophy* (rev.), Harper, 1949. Chap. XI, on modernism and humanism, states the beliefs of humanism about man.

Dakin, Arthur H., *Man the Measure*, Princeton, 1939. Pp. 51 ff. contains the famous "Humanist Manifesto."

Huxley, Julian S., *Man in the Modern World*, Mentor, 1948. "Life can be Worth Living" expresses humanist optimism for this life, apart from any other.



- Lamont, Corliss, *Humanism as a Philosophy*, Philosophical Library, 1949. Chap. VI deals with "The (Humanist) Affirmation of Life."  
 — *The Illusion of Immortality*, Philosophical Library, 1950. A systematic attack on all beliefs in immortality, both as to truth and desirability.  
 Otto, Max C., *The Human Enterprise*, Crofts, 1940. Chaps. VII–IX expresses humanist adjustment to a one-worldly life.  
 — *Science and the Moral Life*, Mentor, 1949. Chap. I, "Man," is a reprint from *The Human Enterprise*. Humanistic conception of nature and capacities of man.  
 Sellars, R. W., *The Next Step in Religion*. Chap. XI, on the soul and immortality, discounts both conceptions.

Chapter XXVI: *With What or Whom Have We to Do?*

I. *Oriental Views*

- Das Gupta, S. N., *History of Indian Philosophy*. Maya, pp. 17–26, God, 42–52. See also "Brahman" and "illusion" in index.  
 Deussen, Paul, *op. cit.* Chap. I, on the doctrine of Brahman.  
 Hsüntze, *Works of*, Vol. I, Book XVII, "Concerning Heaven," counsels men not to depend on it for success.  
 Radhakrishnan, S., ed., *History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western*. See references to Brahman, gods, Maya, reality.  
 — *Indian Philosophy*. Vol. II, references to Brahman in various schools of thought: pp. 165–173; 316–319; 424–428; 535–546; 684–688; 741–749. To Maya: 561–574; 578–587.  
 Thomas, E. J., *The History of Buddhist Thought*. Chap. XVII discusses Buddhist theory of an unsubstantial universe, *i.e.*, the Void.  
 Vivekananda, Swami, *op. cit.* Vol. II contains essay, "God in Everything."

II. *Western Views*

A. *Classical Christian*

- Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Book I, Chaps. X–XIV, on the invisibility, unity, and trinity of God.  
 St. Augustine, *Basic Writings*. Vol. II contains parts of *On the Trinity*.  
 St. Aquinas, *Basic Writings*. Vol. I. Questions 2–11, from *Summa Theologica*. Discussion of God and His attributes.

B. *Philosophical Interpretations*

- Alexander, S., *Space, Time, and Deity*, 2 vols., Macmillan, 1920. Vol. II, Book IV, on "emergent" deity, realized in mankind.  
 Balfour, A. J., *Theism and Humanism*, Doran, 1915. Chap. X.  
 Barnes, Ernest W., *op. cit.* Lecture XVIII discusses (briefly) proofs for God's existence.

- Bertocci, Peter, *op. cit.* Chaps. XI–XVIII discuss the proofs for God, and comes out in favor of a “wider teleology.”
- Boodin, John E., *God*, Macmillan, 1934. Thesis: the universe is a living whole.
- Brightman, E. S., *Is God a Person?* Association Press, 1932. Argument for personal nature of ultimate reality.
- *Philosophy of Religion*. Chap. V describes differing conceptions of God.
- Dewey, John, *A Common Faith*, Yale, 1934. Chap. II, “Faith and its Object,” interprets “God” as a convenient term for natural unities.
- Farmer, Herbert H., *The World and God*, Harper, 1935. God is known in personal relations, as a personal being.
- Garnett, A. C., *A Realistic Philosophy of Religion*, Willett, Clark, 1942. Chaps. IX–X, on God.
- Gilson, Étienne, *God and Philosophy*, Yale, 1951. Critical exposition of concepts (or denial) of God in Greek, medieval, and modern philosophy.
- Hartshorne, Charles, *Man's Vision of God*. Difficult; Chap. III, “The Two Strands in Historic Theology,” discusses conflict of Greek and Hebrew ideas.
- and Reese, William L., *Philosophers Speak of God*, Chicago University, 1953. An exhaustive treatment of philosophic writings on God.
- Hocking, W. E., *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, Yale, 1912. See Chap. XIX, on God as involved in our experience of knowing the world.
- Hume, David, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Hafner Library of Classics), Hafner, 1948 (or in any edition of Hume's works). Famous 18th century discussion criticizing the argument from design for God's goodness and intelligence.
- Krikorian, Y. H., ed., *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, Columbia, 1945. See especially essays by Dewey and Lamprecht opposing supernaturalism.
- Lamont, Corliss, *Humanism as a Philosophy*. Chapter IV describes humanism's theory of a purposeless, solely-known-by-science universe.
- Lyman, Eugene, *op. cit.* Chaps. X–XIII develop a “new” theism.
- Montague, W. P., *Great Visions of Philosophy*, Open Court, 1950. Chap. XIII, on “The Christian Vision.”
- Nevius, Warren, *Religion as Experience and Truth*. Chaps. IX–XII deal systematically and clearly with the historic proofs for God.
- Otto, Max, *Science and the Moral Life*. Essays VII, VIII see man's “hunger for cosmic support” as doomed to disappointment.
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